STUDY

Influencing and understanding political participation patterns of young people

The European perspective

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1 Introduction

Political participation is at the heart of every functioning democracy as it about active involvement of citizens engaged in the formulation, passage and implementation of public policies. Precisely due to this reason many are concerned about the shape of democracies worldwide. Indeed, we are dealing with a gradual decrease in voting turnout, particularly evident with younger generations, however, this drop has accelerated dramatically regardless of democratic traditions and geopolitical contexts. Elections to the European parliament are one of the indicators of this trend since the average turnout rates in this race fail to match that of the national level elections in virtually all member states. The fact that citizens are gradually withdrawing from institutional politics demands immediate action, first and foremost by institutions and actors directly involved in this process; and this report should be understood as a step in this direction.

The purpose of this paper is thus to embed Youth Survey and Segmentation Analysis Report into the discourse on youth political participation which has been one of the dominant discourses in the field of youth for the past decades, both from academic (research) as well as practitioners' point of view. With intention to better target and better understand the youth audience, particularly from the side of catering the needs of different target groups as well as voting behaviour, the European Parliament addressed the need to acquire key information related to successful youth outreach initiatives, information needs of young people, successful youth engagement strategies and youth voting behaviour, particularly when it comes to the Elections to the European Parliament. As an accompanying tool of the Youth Survey Questionnaire implemented by IPSOS, this report seeks to provide answers to some of the key questions related to the efforts of European institutions in their attempt to bridge the gap between them and young people. Additional information is therefore revealed about the "usual" and "unusual" suspects when it comes to young people and European Union institutional politics, the position of structurally disadvantaged young people and the factors influencing their engagement, what information best inform and empower young people, what are they interested in, and what communication channels facilitate their engagement activities the most. At the end of the day, this report also addresses the issue of low youth participation at the European elections and ways to overcome it.

The report is composed of four main thematic sections. The section on youth engagement in democracy tries to provide answers to the questions of the nature of youth participation problem, of the most effective strategies of participation in institutional politics for young people, of topics young people make most passionate about as well as of citizenship norms and values that define young people today. The section on youth participation in European elections contextualizes the

issue of youth turnout and puts forward the rationales for voting at the European level as well as explains the profiles of young voters and non-voters. Section on communication and information strategies explains how youth democracy initiatives best reach out to young people as well as what are the needs and expectations for EU-related information amongst young people. The fourth section focuses on youth outreach activities by looking at outreach and targeting of youth programmes as well as views the impact those programmes make through a comparative perspective.

2 Youth engagement in democracy

This section addresses the following questions:
- What is the nature of youth participation problem?
- What are the most effective strategies of participation in institutional politics for young people?
- What topics are young people the most passionate about?
- What citizenship norms and values define today's citizenship of young people?
- What are the drivers and barriers of youth participation in (institutional) politics?

2.1 Youth participation problem

Most widely accepted models of democracy rely on active participation of politically literate citizens who are interested in how their governments work (see Held, 2006). Maxime "The more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is" (Verba and Nie, 1972, 1) thus clearly indicates that democracies cannot function without participation due to many reasons. Legitimacy is one of them since the basis of political order is assuming citizens' consent from their participation in decision-making (Held, 2006, ix). If large groups of citizens fail to give their consent through inactivity or small levels of influence, then it is hard to take such political order seriously. Another reason is the empirical fact that the outcomes of the political process are biased towards those who participate the most since widespread political participation leads directly to the articulation of interests, which in effect improves the quality of democratic governance (see Macedo et al., 2005; Martin, 2012). At the same control of decision-makers by citizens should be considered as one of the strongest reasons as voting and other forms of participation in politics may be considered one such (external) control (O'Neill, 2009, 7). Macedo et al. (2006, 5) also stress participation can enhance the quality of citizens' lives since it has the potential to educate and invigorate citizens to expand their understanding and capacities. Furthermore, participation in voluntary and non-profit organisations

proved to be a form of provision of a wide variety of goods and services that cannot be provided by the state or the market (ibid.).

There is a general agreement that we are witnessing a problem of low youth political participation in Europe as well as across the democratic world when it comes to institutional politics. With an abundance of studies addressing this issue (e.g., Wattenberg 2002, Norris 2002, Pattie et al. 2004, Macedo et al. 2005, Zukin et al. 2006, Marsh et al. 2007, Dalton 2009, Snell 2010, Martin 2012, Wattenberg 2012, Garcia Albacete 2014, Xenos et al. 2014, Pickard 2019) the fact that young people participate less in institutional politics than other age groups as well as cohorts of young people decades ago is undisputed. The extent of the perceived problem is fully revealed in the voter turnout in elections to all political arenas (national, subnational and European) from which young people are significantly more absent than other parts of population (see Figure 1).

This gap has widened considerably across the democratic world (López Pintor et al. 2002; Wattenberg 2012) and has been replicated also in case of standing as a candidate in a political election (Deželan 2015). Diminishing participation of young people in institutional politics resonates further in the decline in party membership that is evident across European democracies (Van Biezen et al. 2012, 38). Several studies have clearly identified a decrease in party membership among youth (e.g., Cross and Young 2008; Hooghe et al. 2004; Seyd and Whiteley 2004, Deželan 2015). Results of the Wave 7 of the European Values Study (Figure 1) give a detailed picture about how young people across Europe vote significantly less than other age groups at all three levels of election (subnational, national, and European), and how also other measured forms of political action (signing a petition, attending lawful demonstration, joining unofficial strikes) are less practiced by young people. The reduced belonging of young people to political parties/groups has also been recorded.

Figure 1: Political participation in Europe by age groups
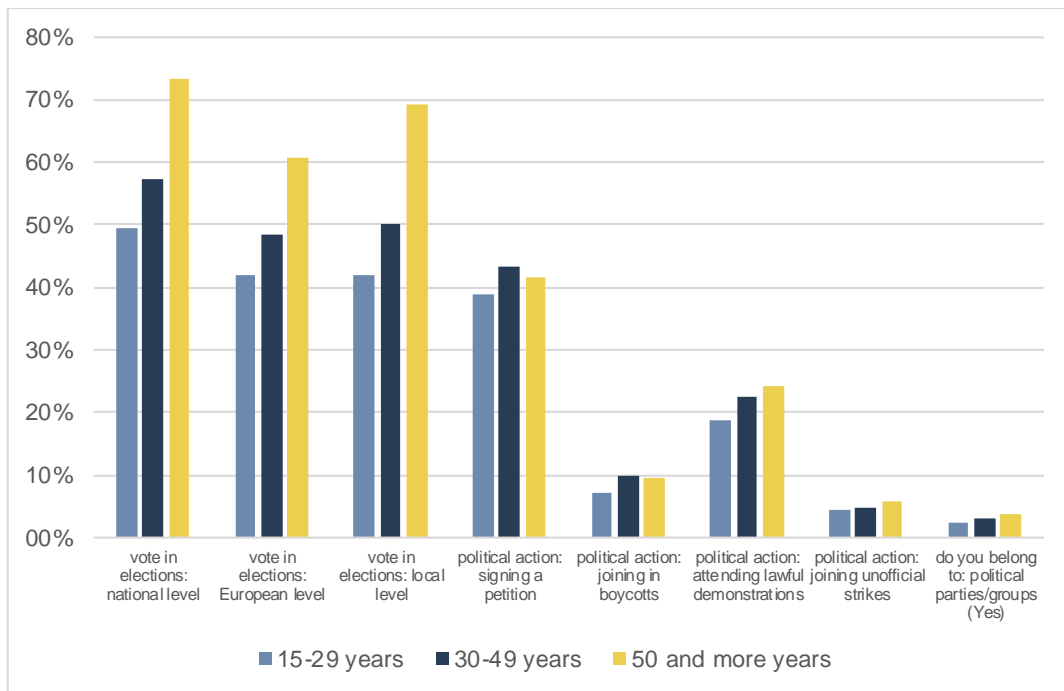
Source: European Values Study, Wave 7 (2020)

This universal trend is generally explained through two competing types of effects: lifecycle effects and generational effects (see for example Martin 2012; Weiss 2020). The former specifies that participation curvilinearly elevates from young age until the middle age and then slowly decreases towards the old age and puts forward a notion that the differences in participation arise from different stages of life individuals are in. This approach basically supports the idea that young people have fewer opportunities than other adults to participate politically and hence they participate less (Weiss 2020, 4).

Even though this view still has relevance in the areas of institutional as well as non-institutional participation (see Weiss 2020) it has been seriously challenged in recent decades by the latter, i.e., theory of generational effects. This view stresses the importance of the pre-adult (political) socialization for adult political thinking and behaviour and studies supporting this view demonstrate that young adults retain these characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. Consequently, according to this view, less active young people will never reach the levels of participation of current older generations due to many discontinuities in their transitions to adulthood (ibid.).

2.2 The problem of definition

But the issue of youth participation is not so straightforward. If we look at political participation from a traditional, more narrow point of view and frame it as participation of individuals in the processes of the formulation, enactment, and implementation of public policies (Parry et al. 1992, 16), then, particularly when we measure it with methodological designs offered by prominent international comparative studies (e.g., European Values Study, World Values Survey, European Social Survey, International Social Survey Programme), young people demonstrate lower scores in almost all examined areas (see Figure 1). However, – despite existing and relevant differences in youth political participation across countries and regions (e.g., Kostadinova 2003; Kostadinova and Power 2007) –, this universal trend is also seen to be a by-product of diversity and frequently outdatedness of definitions behind the measurements of this phenomenon. To be precise, the definition of what is political and what is not is not always shared among academics and likewise not among different groups of population.

Parry et al. (1992), for example, identified staggering differences in understanding about what is political between survey participants and researchers. In addition, the concept of political participation has broadened over time, from activities that focus purely on elections and election campaigns (e.g., Lazarsfeld et al. 1944) to activities that take place beyond the ballot box such as citizen-initiated contact with politicians outside the election process and participation through interest groups (Verba and Nie 1972); petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, street blockades, activities ranging from volunteering in local governmental bodies to jury duty, some even consider participation in non-governmental decision-making processes because such activities might affect participation in the political sphere (see Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992; Dalton 2009; Moyser 2003, 176).

As young people have a greater propensity to engage in non-institutional forms of political participation (see Norris 2002; Dalton 2009; Martin 2012; Deželan 2015; Pickard 2019) broadening of the definition transforms the problem of youth participation from whether they participate to where they participate (Weiss 2020). This culminated in calls to broaden the definition of political participation (O'Toole 2003; Marsh et al. 2007, Pickard 2019) and recognize the problem for what it is. This discussion has not been limited to mainstream political science or political sociology. For example, childhood studies scholars have also argued for broadening understandings of participation and politics as they (e.g. Larkins 2014, Moosa-Meetha 2005) argue that children, rather than being blank slates which learn to become political are instead immersed from birth in the politics of everyday world. Their citizenship is thus shaped by lived, relational experiences of the

institutions and people they have day to day contact with. These interactions, on the whole, deprioritise the voice of those under the voting of candidacy age, meaning an individual often starts their political career based on the experience their voice is not significant compared to those older than them. Political participation thus has to be recognised as a dynamic social phenomenon revealing that young people are becoming increasingly detached from traditional politics and structures (Riley et al. 2010), which does not translate into the age of political apathy and withdrawal of young people into the private sphere, but rather a diversification of the range, forms and targets of political expression (Rosanvallon 2008; Norris 2002).

This reinvention of politics demands to take into account the relevance of new agencies that started to emerge in the form of (new) social movements that differ from traditional forms of political organizations (e.g., political parties, unions and pressure groups) in terms of more fluid membership and contentious politics (Marsh et al. 2007, 9). Likewise it indicates diversification of the repertoires—actions used for political expression—either by reinventing older forms of action (e.g., economic boycotts) or taking use of new ones (e.g., internet activism, social media and blogging) (ibid.). Furthermore, the changing targets of political action denote the change in political power and authority in contemporary societies where the nation-state, as the primary target of action, is losing its primacy to a variety of transnational and supranational public and private agents (ibid., 10).

2.3 Effective strategies of political participation

Narrow definitions of political participation lead to a narrow conception of the political imposed to young people by adults (Marsh et al. (2007, 4) and this consequently fails to fully reveal youth's political imaginaries. As a results, as said before, the reliance on most popular instruments as the central approach of investigating political participation fails to disclose how young people think about politics and incorrectly links non-participation in a prescribed range of activities with apathy. A growing amount of data indicates that young individuals in fact have never withdrawn from politics or have become inactive, but instead have taken up different forms of engagement. The results of the Flash Eurobarometer reveal that while elections stay the main formal mean by which people are given the opportunity to influence the political process – the results show that 46% of young Europeans have voted in the last local, national or European election (see Figure 2) –, there is a wide repertoire of other actions at the disposal of politically engaged individuals. The introduction of micro-political action and the elements of consumer citizenship (Pattie et al. 2004) and identity politics (Norris 2002) reveals the complexity of the political engagement of contemporary youth.

Among the most popular ones is signing an online of offline petition (42%), which is still quite traditional form of engagement. However, the popularity of less traditional forms is also noticeable. Posting opinions about a political or social issue online – despite not addressing the issue of matching definition of the political between young people and survey designers that could lead to even better results (see the previous section) – is a practice performed by more than a quarter (26%) of young people. One out of four young Europeans (25%) is also practicing politically aware consumerism through consumer boycotting or buycotting; i.e., intentionally buying or not buying certain products due to political, ethical and environmental reasons. Almost one quarter (24%) of young people have been also involved in street protests and demonstrations and 23% of young Europeans has used hashtags or changed their profile pics to show support for a political or social issue. More than one fifth of young people (21%) also volunteered for a charity/campaign organization (e.g., Oxfam, Amnesty International) and 15% have actively taken part in public online or offline consultation.

Figure 2: Have you ever done any of the following? (% - EU27)

EU27 average

Voted in the last local, national or European election	46%
Created or signed a petition (on paper or online)	42%
Posted opinions online or on social media about a political or social issue	26%
Boycotted or bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	25%
Taken part in street protests or demonstrations	24%
Used hashtags or changed your profile picture to show support for a political or social issue	23%
Volunteered for a charity/campaign organisation (e.g. Amnesty, Greenpeace, Oxfam)	21%
Taken part in a public consultation (online or offline)	15%
Joined a youth organisation	14%
Contacted a politician about an issue	10%
None of these	10%
Don't know	3%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

What needs to be noted when observing these results is also the fact that only 10% of those who participated in the survey did not report any of the available forms of activities from still quite an exclusive list of possible political action. The facts that elections are the most popular form of political action with 46% of those who report voting and that there are only 10% of those absent

from all listed actions lead to the conclusion the classical one-dimensional view of individuals who participate, from non-political to political to the maximum (see Milbrath 1965), is not relevant. We should rather talk about a multi-dimensional concept indicating that certain individuals are very active in some modes of political action but passive in others and vice versa (see also Moyser 2003, 177; Verba et al. 1995). And more importantly than that, much more young people are politically active than it is generally perceived.

The aforementioned findings are supported by additional Flash Eurobarometer (2021) results measuring the frequency of discussions young people have with their friends and relatives about political and social issues. The results of the survey indicate that only 13% of young people never discuss political and social issues with their friends or relatives (see Table 1 in the Appendix). The ones that do (86%), discuss political and social issues either occasionally (61%) or frequently (25%) which demonstrates that there is only a small share (up to 15%) of young individuals completely alienated from key political and societal issues. And even in that group there are individuals that in fact do engage politically, but they just do not perceive it as such.

In terms of effective strategies to make your voice heard by decision makers, the situation is not much different as the data on most practiced forms of participation revealed (see Figure 2). It appears that respondents act in accordance with their perception of the effectiveness of political action they engage into. Therefore, the Flash Eurobarometer (2021) data reveals that young Europeans believe – when raising a voice to be heard by decision-makers is concerned – that voting is still the most effective strategy, with 41% of respondents choosing this type of action (see Figure 3). This is particularly the case with women since 45% of them (compared to 38% of men) believe this is the most efficient strategy. Taking part in street protests and demonstrations appears alternative to voting and second most effective political action. A clear sign of contentious or protest politics popular among the European youth is therefore also a sign of a different, more engaged political imaginary young people share. The third most favoured form of political action is petition since 30% of respondents believe this is the most effective way to make your voice heard. Interestingly, women again prove to be more frequently convinced that these forms are effective which is later revealed also in their participation levels.

Figure 3: In your opinion what are the three most effective actions for making one's voice heard by decision-makers? (% - EU27)

Figure 3: In your opinion what are the three most effective actions for making one's voice heard by decision-makers? (% - EU27)

Action	%
Voting in local, national or European elections	41%
Taking part in street protests or demonstrations	33%
Creating or signing a petition (on paper or online)	30%
Contacting a politician about an issue	19%
Boycotting or buying certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	18%
Posting opinions online or on social media about a political or social issue	18%
Volunteering for a charity/campaign organisation (e.g. Amnesty, Greenpeace, Oxfam)	17%
Taking part in a public consultation (online or offline)	16%
Using hashtags or changing your profile picture to show your support for a political or social issue	11%
Joining a youth organisation	10%
Don't know	6%
None of these are effective	6%
Something else	3%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

2.4 Changing citizenship of young people

Due to new insights into the political engagement of young people and broadening of new possibilities to politically engage as well as definitions of political engagement there is an accumulation of studies indicating that a new type of citizens is emerging (e.g., Dalton 2009; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Norris 2002; Xenos et al. 2014; Marsh et al. 2007; Bennet et al. 2009). These citizens are less collectivist and more individualist, cause-oriented and engaged. They are more likely to be members of informal groups, involved in protest politics because of growing political disaffection and alienation, and focused on specific issues or policy concerns (for a detailed overview see Marsh et al. 2007, 10-17).

The process that began in 1980s, due to global restructuring of economies and production, caused fundamental changes in the way people formulate their outlook on and relationship with the world (e.g., Giddens 1991). As individuals increasingly take responsibility for managing their personal identities and are detached from modern organizations and institutions that previously provided

shared status, younger citizens sense less duties to participate in institutional politics and more prone to display their lifestyle values through greater personally expressive or self-actualizing affiliations that can be fluid and changing (Bennet et al. 2009, 106). These processes therefore caused two models of citizenship, i.e., the dutiful citizen and the actualizing citizen. As citizen identity is dynamic concept, the introduction of social networks provides an opportunity to introduce more expressive elements into conventional politics (ibid. 107) and thus reduce the gap between two models.

The Flash Eurobaromoter (2021) survey reveals an image matching the debate above as we can see that young Europeans today demonstrate a mix of citizenship norms that they prioritize. To be precise, survey respondents attributed high level of importance to items that measure the presence of dutiful as well as actualizing citizenship. The second highest level of importance was attributed to reporting a crime, which received a mean score of 8,0 on a 0 to 10 scale, with always obeying the law (mean 7,8) and voting in elections (mean 7,7) closely followed as the third and fourth most important item (see Figure 4). These items demonstrate commitment to social order and acceptance of state authority as well as public participation in politics and support the relevance of strong sense of responsibility and duty to defend established institutional framework and to input to government or formal institutions, duty to participate in the core institutions of government as well as demonstrate core democratic acts, thus indicating a strong presence of a notion of dutiful citizenship. At the same time, the importance of forming their own opinions was assessed as the most important citizenship norm (mean 8,1), with supporting those who are worse off still being high on the priority list with a mean score of 7,4. This indicates, on the other hand, that critical and deliberative aspects of citizenship as well as ethical responsibility to others is also importantly prioritised by young citizens thus making the aspects of actualizing citizenship as equally important.

Figure 4: To be a good citizen, how important do you think it is for a person to … ? (% - EU27)
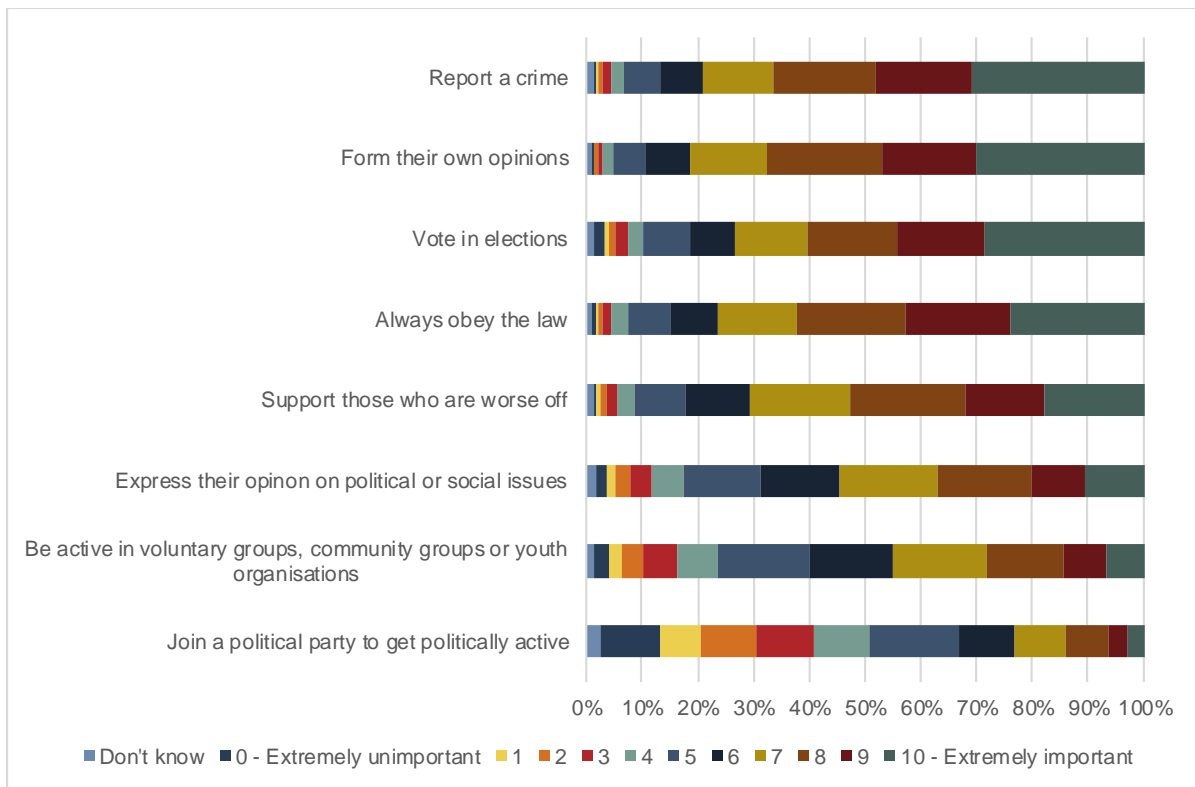
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Somewhat less important proved to be expression of their own activity on political and social issues with a mean score of 6,6 and activity in voluntary groups, community groups and youth organizations (mean 6,0) thus indicating that, though assessed as relevant, the focus on lifestyle politics does not match the importance of core democratic acts and the importance of participation in society beyond voting in not as high as voting itself. That being said, joining political parties to get politically active as a form of duty to participate through membership organizations is absolutely the lowest ranked citizenship norm with a mean score of 4,3.

If we add the notion that young people join loose networks for social action and perform communication and political action heavily through social media and other online tools, then it is clear that we're dealing with an amalgamation of actualizing and dutiful citizenship norms that define this generational cohort. These young citizens are self-actualizing and networked – as they are more likely to participate in non-hierarchical networks and conduct social relations through social media (Loader et al. 2014). The relevance of social media as information sources is clearly indicated in the Flash Eurobarometer (2021) revealing that social media tops the list of information sources on political and social issues for young Europeans together with news websites. To be precise, 41% of respondents reported for both sources that they represent one of up to three key

information sources (see Figure 5). The list is then followed by sources most popular before the rise of the internet and social media with TV (34%), friends, colleagues, and family (26%) and radio (20%). A detailed examination of results also indicate that social media is clearly the most preferred information source with 16-19 (45%) and 20-25 year-olds (43%), while news websites present the source for young people between the age of 26 and 30.

Figure 5: From which of these sources do you get most of your information on political and social issues? Please select up to three responses. (% - EU27)
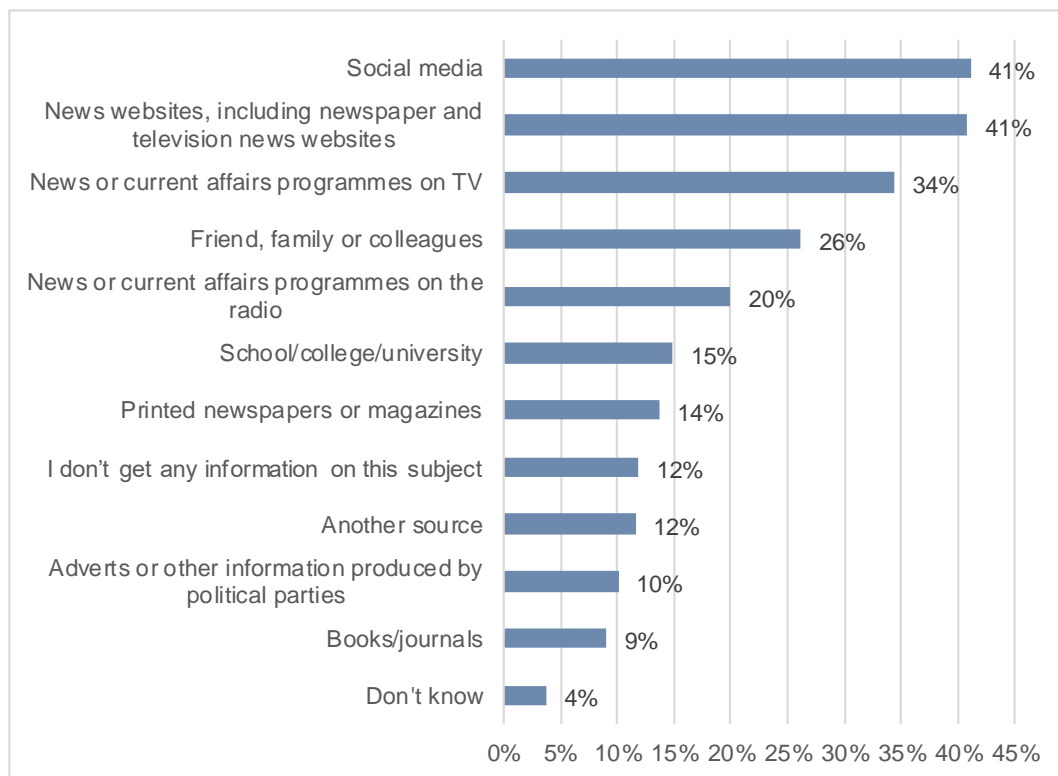
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

When looking more specifically into what type of social media is the proffered tool of many young people to acquire information on political and social issues, there are no surprises. The preferred tool is Facebook with 54% of respondents selecting it as the most relevant source, followed by Instagram (48%), Youtube (35%) and Twitter (29%) (see Table 3 in the Appendix). There are significant differences within the population of young people. For example, 10% more women than men use Instagram as the most relevant information source, while 17% more man use Youtube as the most relevant information source. Likewise the age differences are vast as 32% more 26-30 year-olds use Facebook as the main information source compared to 16-19 year-olds. On the other hand, 30% more 16-19 year-olds use Instagram compared to young people aged between 26 and 30.

Despite the revealed results, we have to note that the networked character of young people does not represent a total discontinuity with the notion of citizenship based on duty, as young citizens still perform acts that are reminiscent of traditional politics, but at the same time also disrupt dominant discourses of dutiful citizenship and exhibit new regulatory norms of inclusion and exclusion (see Bennett et al. 2009; Dalton 2009; Loader et al. 2014). At the same time, it has to be noted that young people do not represent a homogeneous cohort of individuals thus making intra-cohort differences sometimes even bigger that differences between different generations and age-groups.

2.5 Drivers and barriers of young people's participation

The new type of young citizens demonstrating presented levels of citizenship norms is less or more present in the political process depending on whether certain conditions are met. If young people have the means and skills to participate, if they have interest, and if they are appropriately mobilized, then there is a pretty good chance that they will participate. This model of participation based on resources, interest, and recruitment (see Verba, et al., 1995), seen also as motivation, ability, and triggers (e.g., behavior model of persuasive design; see Fogg 2009), stipulates that the reasons for cannot (lack of resources), don't want to (lack of psychological engagement), or weren't asked to participate (lack of recruitment networks) generally centre around a set of variables clustered around socio-economic, psychological, and socialization reasons. Hilderman and Anderson (2017) operationalize three above-mentioned clusters of variables having impact on youth political participation into the following checklist. They believe young people will participate if they feel an obligation to participate; if they feel social pressure from family, peers, or others; if they believe something is at stake; if they have already participated in the past; if the barriers to participation have been eliminated; and they have been contacted.

Socio-economic reasons for a lack of involvement usually revolve around income, since those with the highest income tend to be the most active in electoral as well as protest politics (Schlozman et al., 2005; Smets and Van Ham, 2013). Education is an additional socio-economic reason for greater involvement, although higher education levels generally do not lead to higher levels of traditional participation. Other factors include marital status (Denver, 2008), mobility (Smets and Van Ham, 2013, 350), race, ethnicity, gender, citizenship status, religious minorities, and so forth. When it comes to resources, the ability to understand politics is one of important indications of whether an individual has appropriate practical (time, money, access), learnt (skills, competences, experience) and felt resources (confidence and sense of efficacy) to engage in political action. The Flash

Eurobarometer (2021) survey revealed there is quite an important disconnect of young people from governments at various levels, which was expected already from reviewing types and levels of political engagement (Figure 2). The disconnect is the strongest in case of understanding the European Union, while the national governments are more easily understandable for respondents (see Figure 6). When it comes to national governments, 41% of respondents feel they either do not understand very much or nothing at all. 51% of respondents report about that level of understanding for local governments, while the perception of individual's understanding of European Union is the worst with 55% of respondents feeling they do not understand much or nothing at all. What is interesting, although empirically proven as soon as in 1960s (see Campbell et al. 1960), this measure clearly indicates gender gap in understanding of institutional politics since 8-10% of more women than man report not very much or no understanding about the three levels of authorities. These perception levels of understanding political institutions match participation levels we examined in the previous sections. In order to stand a realistic chance in improvement of participation levels, the levels of understanding would need to elevate.

Figure 6: How much, if anything, do you feel you understand about…? (% - EU27)
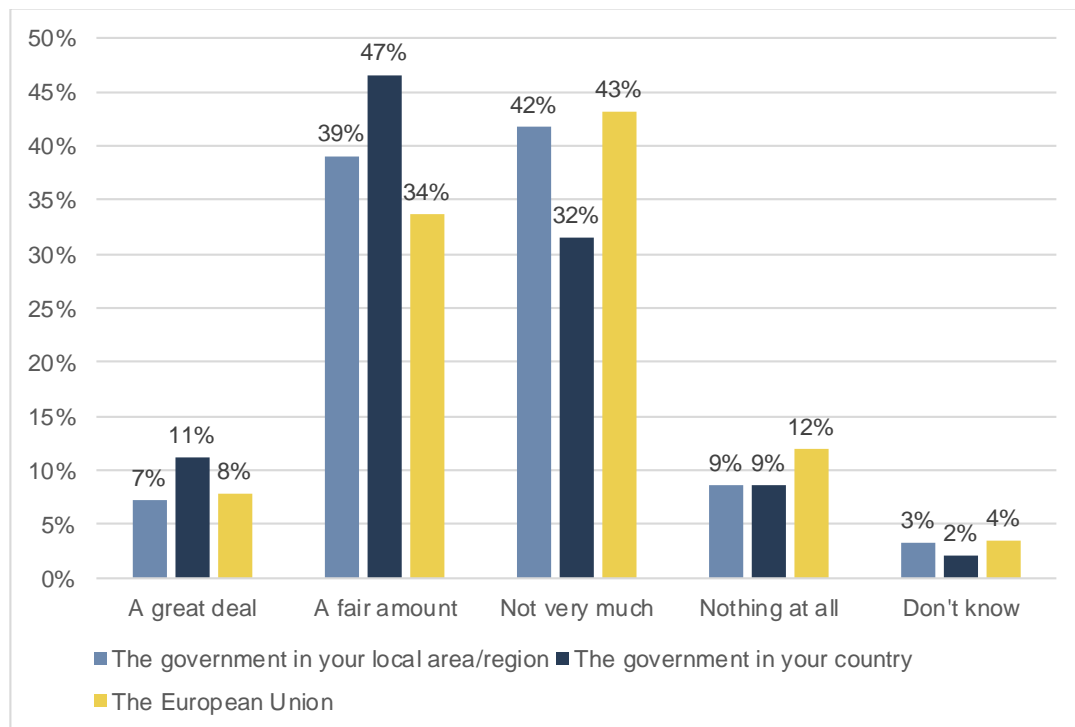
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

When it comes to external political efficacy that could also be translated into the felt resources about individual's ability to influence the political process as at least one half of respondents – depending on the political level – feel they have little or no voice over the important decisions, laws and policies

(see Figure 7). The situation is noticeably the worse when it comes to the European Union for which 68% of respondents feel they have very little or no say about its decisions, legislation and policies. With such a low level of perceived external political efficacy indicating the perceived value of voices and votes of citizens, it is hardly surprising that the level of participation in the institutions of the European Union is even lower than already low participation in national and subnational political processes.

Figure 7: How much of a say do you feel you can have over important decisions, laws and policies affecting…? (% - EU27)
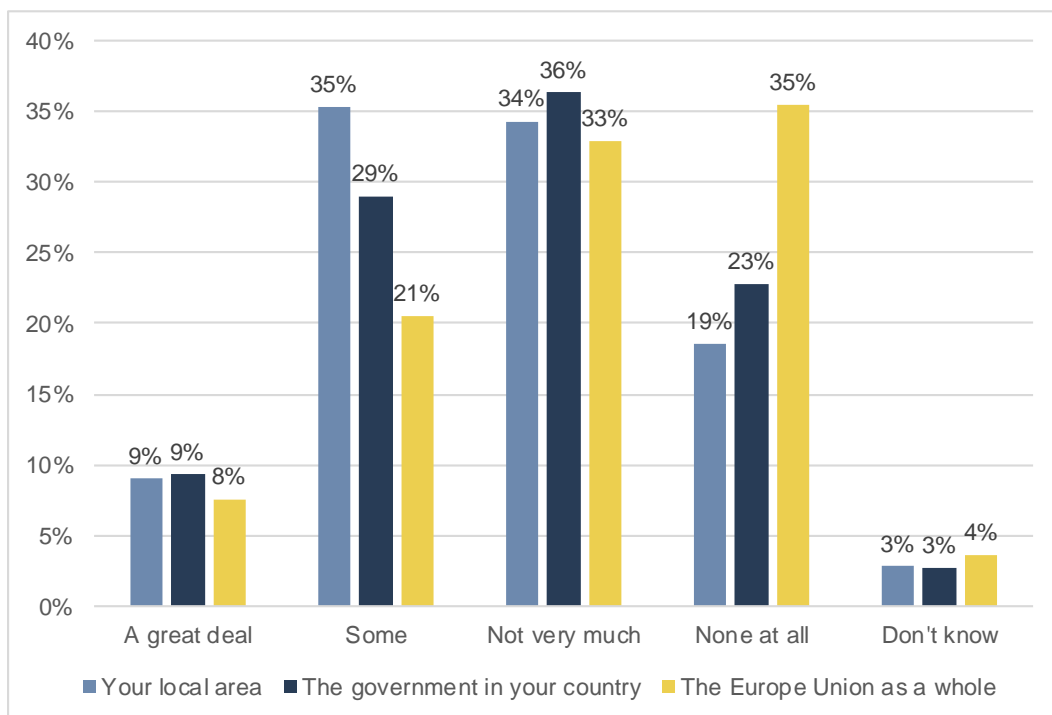
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Psychologically speaking, political efficacy importantly influences attitudes to participation as it indicates the extent to which someone feels effective or that their vote matters (Axford and Rosamond, 1997, 102). Political interest is another extremely important indicator of political participation and political trust and cynicism further proved to negatively affect political participation (Smets and Van Ham, 2013, 355), while having had previous political participation, particularly with a positive experience, proved to be a strong motivator for political involvement. Among the variables linked to political socialization families were identified as important socialization agents that significantly help shape participation patterns. As parental influence weakens with age (Plutzer, 2002), schools and other institutions take over in equipping individuals with the resources required for political participation (Verba et al., 1995). Likewise, peers are

significant agents, as they play key roles in shaping attitudes towards politics during adolescence (Torney-Purta, 1995).

As already revealed in the section on citizenship norms and changing citizenship of young people, there are certain topics young people are particularly interested in. Flash Eurobarometer (2021) revealed that when listing up to three priority topics, the most prioritised topics for young people are tackling poverty and inequality with 43% of young people selecting it and combatting climate change and protecting the environment (39%) (see Figure 8). This focus on lifestyle politics clearly indicates the relevance of the actualizing citizenship model, however, at the same time conventional youth topics such a youth unemployment (37%), education and training (28%) and health and wellbeing (34%) remain high on the priority list. Corruption as an indicator of integrity having an immense impact on trust also proves relevant (27%). When looking at the differences in prioritization according to age and gender, younger individuals (16-19 old) and particularly women demonstrate visible gaps to other groups in their added support for topics closer to the principles of social activism and distributive justice (environment and climate change, tackling poverty and inequality).

Figure 8: In your opinion, which three of the following issues should be given priority? (% - EU27)
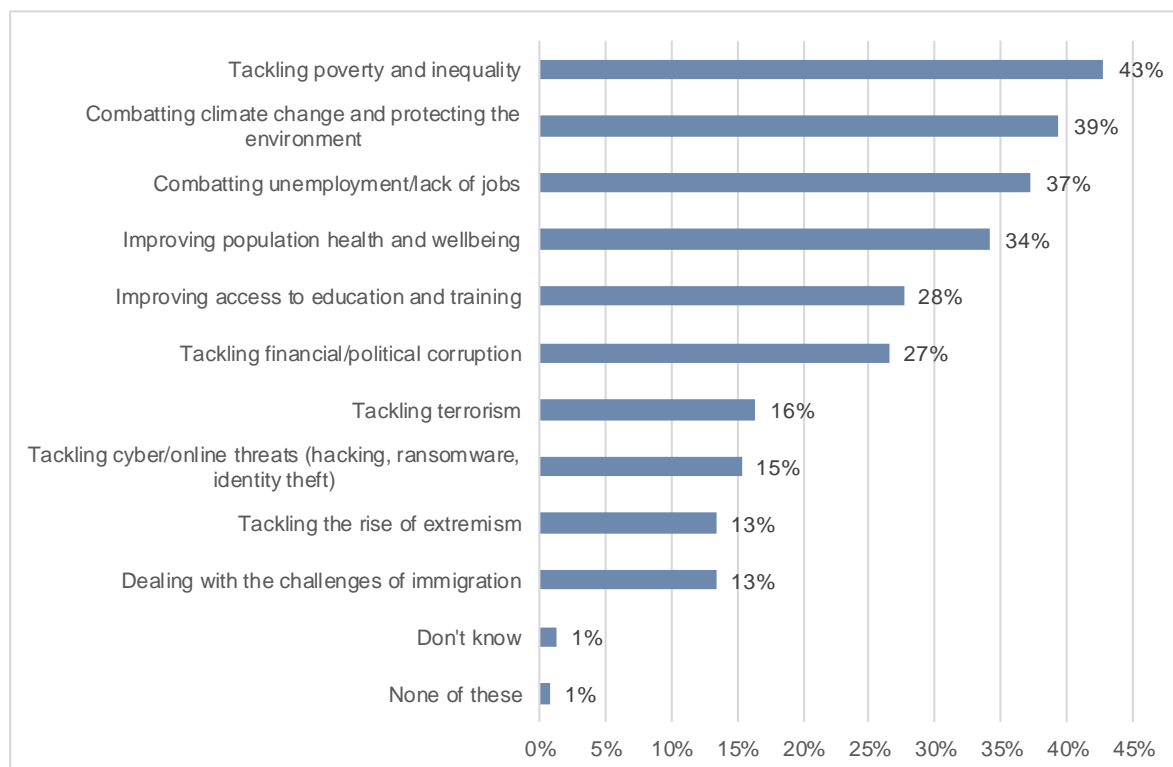
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

In terms of prioritised values, Flash Eurobarometer (2021) reveals the importance of ethical as well as critical and deliberative aspects of citizenship for young people. The most prioritised value for young people is protection of human rights and democracy that was selected by 56% of respondents, followed by freedom of speech (48%), gender equality (38%) and interpersonal solidarity (36%) (see Table 2 in the appendix). When it comes to values, young people thus reveal much more actualizing and far less dutiful image of themselves than the one that emerged from their presentation of the citizenship norms expected from a good citizen (see Figure 3). Interestingly, it seems as if they portrayed a citizen that would present a perfect match between them and institutional politics, thus creating an ideal for bridging the gap between them and political institutions. Again, we observed important differences between genders and age groups as women demonstrate higher level of support to the protection of human rights and democracy and gender equality, while the youngest group of respondents (16-19 years old) demonstrate higher level of support to gender equality and 25-30 year-olds to solidarity between people and countries (see Table 2 in the appendix)

Political trust, also called institutional trust or political support, corresponds with psychological engagement. This concept includes the level of trust that an individual has in the political system, politicians or political institutions (Nygård and Jakobsson 2013, 70). Declining political trust affects voting choices by making politically distrustful voters support non-incumbent candidates (Hetherington 1999) as well as decreasing trust acts as a motivation to support third-party alternatives, while distrust significantly negatively affects electoral participation (Bélanger and Nadeau 2005). In addition, political cynicism, which is frequently portrayed as the general mistrust of particular leaders, political groups or the political process, has been found to have a negative effect on certain modes of political participation (see Smets and Van Ham 2013, 355). In addition to an increase in abstentions of citizens from main political processes, the declining trust in mainstream political institutions and actors has thus also opened up more room also to anti-establishment candidates and rhetoric. This processes frequently introduced new populist initiatives, more polarization and in effect less of an appeal to democratic and critical young citizens.

Participation is also influenced by the system, the culture, and the dominant ideas in a society. Explanations of political participation focused on structure emphasize the relationship between structure and individual (Hooghe and Stolle 2005, 43), and try to determine the reasons for decreased participation through formal rules (legal framework and organisational rules), social structures (class, religion, gender and ethnicity), and dominant ideas (belief systems, e.g., patriarchy) (see Axford and Rosamond, 1997). Such explanations show how important channels of mobilisation

can be for young people in particular contexts. Political competition is extremely important for political participation because competitive environments are much more engaging, as mobilisation efforts become more intense and issue positions more developed (Kahn and Kenney, 1999). Healthy partisan competition and an institutional design that allows for real debate among competing parties over important policy positions are again incentives for political engagement (Macedo et al., 2005, 46). Likewise, political campaigns have a positive effect on political participation as they may also be seen as educational exercises—helping citizens learn about candidates, their positions and the relevant issues. Similarly, "get-out-the-vote" campaigns that try to amplify voters' feelings of civic duty also contribute to greater involvement (Cox and Munger, 1989; Green and Gerber, 2004). Other important structural features include mass media, regulation of elections and political campaigning (e.g. electoral system, e-voting, voting age provisions, free airtime). Political mobilisation structures proved to be important driver of political participation (Macedo et al., 2005, 45), but they are losing impact due to the radical transformation of mass membership organisations, which no longer need a wide base (Skocpol, 2003). This transformation of political parties, voluntary organisations, and labour unions has reduced grassroots activities and face-to-face politics, thus creating a big gap between political organizations and voters. To Hooghe and Stolle (2005, 45) the question thus is not whether young people are still interested in politics, but whether parties are still interested in young people.

When three conditions (ability, motivation, and trigger) are not met, the participation is still not likely to happen or will happen with undesired consequences. From the overview of potential variables affecting individual-level participation, non-participation does not simply equate to apathy as different groups of non-participants in politics may be identified. Snell (2010) identified four distinct groups of politically uninvolved youth: apathetic, uninformed, distrustful and disempowered, indicating these individuals may be uninterested in politics, but may also be uninformed, distrustful or disempowered. The Flash Eurobarometer survey (2021) indicates that, when it comes to most frequently practiced form of political action and also the most effective in the eyes of survey respondents (see above), i.e. voting, the reasons for non-voting are manifold and in line with dimensions explained above. Out of those, who did not vote, 15% express lack of interest for participation, which is far less than one might assume if listening to political discussions about youth apathy (see Figure 1 in the appendix). In fact, there are many resource-related reasons that proved important; for example, 10% of respondents report lack of time, 11% report lack of understanding of key issues, 13% think politicians don't listen to regular people and 11% are not confident in expressing their opinion. The survey also indicates the relevance of triggers as even 9% of

respondents themselves list the absence of invitation to vote as the key reason for not attending the vote.

2.6 Section summary

Young people participate less in institutional politics than other age groups as well as cohorts of young people decades ago. This is also caused by outdatedness of definitions behind the measurements of political participation because the definition of what is political is not always shared among academics as well as other groups of population. As young people have a greater propensity to engage in non-institutional forms of political participation, broadening of the definition transforms the problem of youth participation from whether they participate to where they participate. While elections stay the main mean of influencing the political process, there is a wide repertoire of other popular actions (demonstrations, petitions, engaged consumerism etc.). In addition, only one tenth do not report practicing any of the available forms political action and the equal share of young people never discuss political and social issues with their friends or relatives thus clearly indicating that much more young people are politically active than it is generally perceived.

Young people also act in accordance with their perception of the effectiveness of political action they engage into. They believe that voting is still the most effective strategy of raising a voice, followed by taking part in street protests and demonstrations, which is a clear sign of the relevance of protest politics among the European youth. This also indicates that young Europeans demonstrate a mix of citizenship norms, from norms of a dutiful citizen – indicating commitment to social order, acceptance of state authority and duty to defend established institutional framework – to norms of an actualizing citizenship demonstrating equal importance of critical and deliberative aspects of citizenship as well as ethical responsibility to others. In line with that, they are also prone to join loose networks for social action and perform communication and political action heavily through social media and other online tools. Thus the relevance of social media as information sources is clear and tops the list of information sources with news websites, followed by TV. The preferred tool is Facebook, followed by Instagram, Youtube and Twitter, with significant intra-group diversity in preferences (i.e., younger prefer Instagram while older Facebook).

When it comes to potential reasons of reduced participation, there is an important disconnect of young people from authorities at various levels, with the case of the European Union being the most extreme one as individuals reported they understand the Union the least. In addition, again

demonstrating much worse results than national or local governments, two thirds of young people feel they have little or no voice over the important decisions, laws and policies of the European Union. There are certain topics young people are particularly interested in and induce their engagement. The most prioritised topics for young people are tackling poverty and inequality, combatting climate change and protecting the environment. At the same time, conventional youth topics such a youth unemployment, education and training and health and wellbeing remain high on the priority list. The most prioritised value for young people is protection of human rights and democracy, followed by the freedom of speech, gender equality and interpersonal solidarity.

3. Youth and participation in European elections

This section addresses the following questions:

- Why young people participate less in the European political arena?
- What is the rationale behind voting at European elections for young people?
- What are the profiles of voters and non-voters at the European elections?

Even though the levels of voter participation have continued to reach their lowest points, we have demonstrated that voting is still one of the most extensively exercised modes of political participation as well as perceived to be one of the most effective ones. As most widespread and regularised political activity with the biggest overall citizen influence on the landscape of most democracies, elections are particularly important to the political system of the European Union, as they represent the only the only mechanism that directly enables citizens to exercise control over their representatives in the European Union. As a rule, more than for the national-level elections, election turnout figures continuously suffer for subnational (local, regional, state) or supranational elections (Moyser 2003, 178).

In case of European Parliament elections, in their seminal study Reif and Schmitt (1980) argue that these elections are mere additional national second-order elections because they are rather determined by domestic cleavages than by EU political differences. As a result, even though absenteeism does neither uniformly affect all societies nor equally affect all sub-groups of the population, the turnout levels for least participating categories are universally worrying. Survey data frequently fails to demonstrate this completely as, particularly when it comes to questions about voting – which is socially desirable behaviour and perceived as key citizenship norm of good citizens (see the previous chapter) – respondents over-report voting turnout on average between 10% and

20% (see, for example McAllister and Quinlan 2021). This is clearly the case also when looking at European Parliament elections with reported results for 16-30 year-olds – the group with the lowest voting turnout – being 15% above the official turnout result (see Figure 2 in the appendix). Likewise, data from the European Election Studies (Schmitt et al. 2020) indicate virtually the same turnout result.

3.1 Rationales for voting at European elections

Although surveys, even if on a representative sample of general population or young people – are not most reliable of tools when it comes to turnout data, they are one of the most widespread, cost-efficient, and robust tools for examination of other relevant dimensions in the research of voting behaviour. As we already explained in the section on drivers and barriers to participation, there are many reasons why voters do not attend elections (see also Figure 1 in the Appendix). It has a great deal to do with the resources, triggers, and motivation. Young people's interest in European elections may be particularly lower due to lower level of understanding of European politics, the fact that this electoral race is still a predominantly second-order competition (see Reif and Schmitt 1980), that there is rarely a notion of a tight race between two competing alternatives and that people do not believe their voice is heard and that politicians listen to them, particularly because of the remoteness of Brussels and Strasbourg from daily lives of citizens.

But apart from the reasons to abstain from voting in European elections seen in Figure 1 in the Appendix, it is also important to see what is the rationale for voting, regardless of the fact whether these individuals actually voted or not. The Flash Eurobarometer reveals (2021) that young Europeans, as expected from the overview of results on the prevailing norms of good citizens, expose the dutiful aspects of democratic citizenship (individual's responsibility, citizen duty) as the key rationale for voting in European elections (see Figure 10). More engaged notion of citizenship is sensed among additional reasons for voting, particularly in terms of making one's voice heard as well as prevention of alternative interest from gaining too much power (i.e., mechanisms of control). What is also interesting is the link young people are making between voting and various aspects of descriptive (i.e., age-group; background) representation. As a kind of relief, particularly when legitimacy of the European Union is observed, could be the fact that very small share of young people understand European elections as a way of showing support to the European Union thus indicating that ideas of describing European elections as "legitimacy referendums" on the European Union are false.

Figure 10: Below are some reasons people have given for voting in European elections. Which three of these reasons, if any, do you think are most convincing? (% - EU27)

It is a way of taking responsibility for the future — 32%
It is one's duty as a citizen — 32%
It is an important way of making your voice heard — 30%
It helps prevent groups you disagree with gaining too much power — 29%
It is a way to bring about real change — 26%
It helps ensure the view of people from your background are represented in politics — 22%
It helps ensure the view of people in your age group are represented in politics — 21%
It is a way of showing your support for the EU — 16%
Don't know — 6%
None of these reasons are convincing to you — 7%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

There are also two interesting intra-group trends appearing that we should acknowledge when it comes to reasons for voting. Firstly, the group of 26-30 demonstrates an importantly higher level of dutiful citizenship norms than other age groups (voting is a citizen's duty), which citizenship norms do importantly alter with age, even within youth. Another is a more pessimistic view of institutional politics that older individuals share due to their experience and thus acquired political knowledge while younger ones still have a certain level of naiveté about elections. To be precise 26-30 year-olds perceive elections less as an instrument to bring about real change than individuals 20-25 years of age and, in turn, the latter perceive this much less than 16-19 year-olds. In addition, when we look at the support to abovementioned reasons from the viewpoint of previously demonstrated voting behaviour (did or did not vote at European elections), we can again see the prevalence of the dutiful citizen. More than 80% of those who support the idea of voting out of duty actually voted while the percentage for the arguments of making your voice heard, prevention of opposition gaining too much strength, and responsibility for the future is around 70%, and for the representation arguments (age, background) below 70%. These results in effect indicate that the ballot box is still seen more as a manifestation of civic duties than place where substantial changes are initiated. In

order to raise appeal of European elections also to the groups less dutiful voters, this image has to be altered.

3.2 Profiles of young voters at European elections

When we look at the propensity to vote (even if some cases we are merely talking about propensity to report voting), it is clear that a positive image of the European Union importantly impacts the decision to vote or not to vote. Positive image of the European Union is closely connected to the trust in the EU and EU institutions and therefore indicates positive psychological engagement also connected to a positive experience with participation in the European project. As a result, almost 80% of the ones reporting participation at European elections also report a very positive image of it and, in turn, only 57% of the ones holding a very negative image of it report voting (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Image of the European Union and opinion about it from the perspective of voters at the last European elections? (% - EU27)
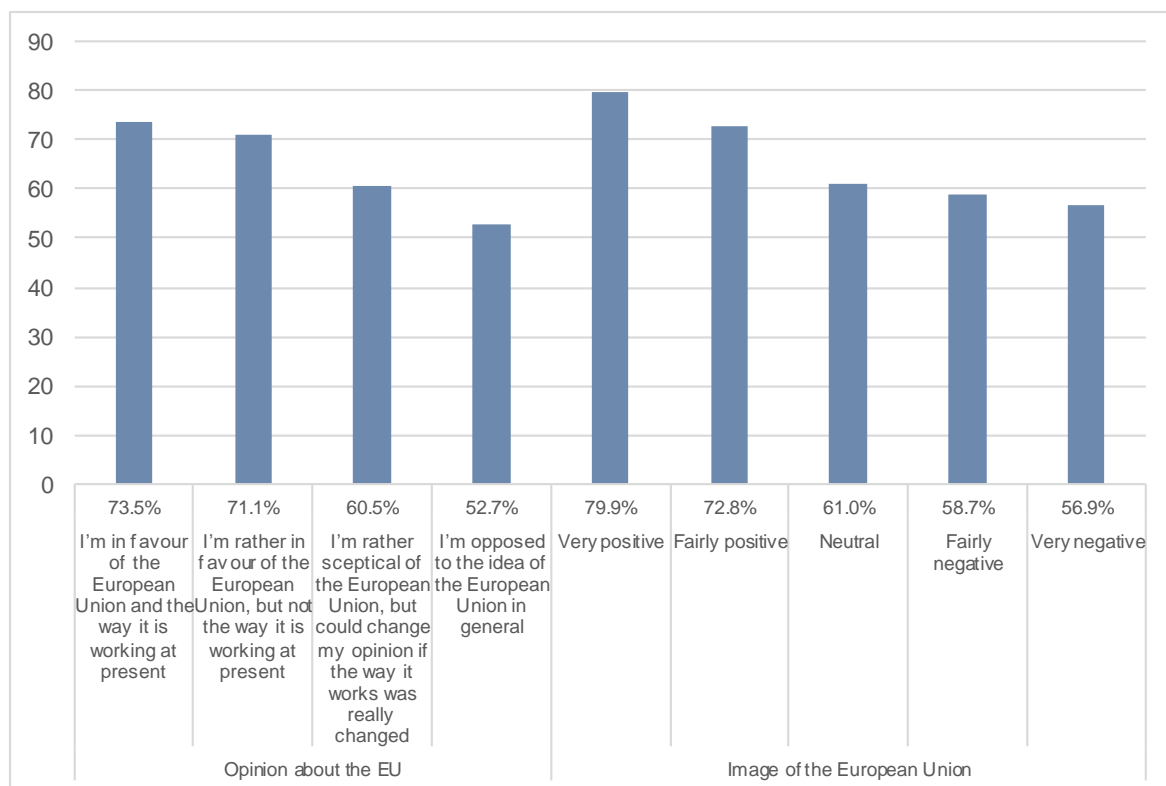
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Somewhat similar result, although more complex, is revealed with a breakdown of opinion about the EU and reported voting. In case of the ones holding opposing view to the idea of the European Union, it is clear that they also abstain from the European elections the most (53% reported

participation rate). In a similar way, the moderate sceptics report a bit higher propensity to (report) voting (60%), while the most surprising result can be identified with groups of moderate and clear supporters of the EU (see Figure 9). To be precise, there is not much difference in reported voting between the two groups despite the different level of support to the European Union. In essence, this signals to the fact that resource-related and particularly factors triggering participation at the European elections need to be explored and, quite possibly, strengthened since there is a large pool of potential voters positive about the European project that somehow fails to attend the vote.

People having a positive opinion about the European Union or holding a positive image of it should be looked at with particular care. Not that other segments of young Europeans should be discarded, of course, it is merely a question of efficiency in attracting extra voters to the political arena; and these ones could be attracted with the least effort as well as with tools available to the European union (mobilisation tools triggering participation). The ones holding the more positive view are young males as females tend to be more neutral. Likewise, the persons holding an occupational status also tend to be more neutral than positive about the European union when compared to other occupational statuses as well as individuals coming from a low-income households, however, not the ones not earning enough for basic bills (see Table 4 in the Appendix). On the other hand, ethnic, religious, sexual minorities and particularly persons with a migrant/refugee background – interestingly, not disabled persons – hold more positive image of the European Union. Age differences in the image of European Union within the group of young people are not noticeable.

When observing the opinion statements about the European Union some additional nuances emerge from otherwise similar results. To be precise, women have a bit less positive opinion about the integration than men. However, not in favour of more negative views, they in fact demonstrate a rather large undecided group (16% opted for response "Don't know" compared to 8% of male respondents) (see Table 5 in the Appendix). What is also interesting is that the enthusiastic image of the European Union drops with age as there are 30% of individuals in the age group of 16 - 19 years of age who believe are in favour of the European Union and the way it is working at present, while there are only 26% of 26 - 30 year-olds holding that opinion. This drop, however, is merely reflected in a reverse trend when it comes to persons holding a more realist position on European Union that are rather in favour of it, but not the way it is presently functioning. What is also clear that the most pessimist and sceptical views about the European Union are shared among those with the least number of education, while the most positive views hold respondents still studying. Likewise, self-employed and persons not currently holding an occupational status share more enthusiastic and positive-realist views, while manual workers are much more sceptical, if not opposing to the idea of

the European Union. People from high-income households are also demonstrating much more enthusiastic and positive-realist views than people from less affluent households and, again, equally as enthusiastic about the European Union are members of ethnic, religious or other minorities. Respondents with migrant/refugee background and sexual minorities hold more realist, but still positive views about the EU, while persons with disabilities again demonstrate much more sceptical views about the European project. Based on the acquired results it is clear that in some cases additional triggers are needed to spur participation while in others a more elaborate campaigns aimed to the increase of knowledge and information about the European Union and the role it performs through its programmes and policies, particularly in relation to most vulnerable groups of society.

When we look at the current trends of enthusiasm about the European Union, the situation is not positive. There are more of those who report that their image of the European Union got worse over the last year (31%), while there are only 17% of those who report a better image of the European Union than a year ago (see Table 5 in the Appendix). Particularly disappointed are the young Europeans between 26 - 30 years of age and the ones having the lowest level of education. Again, manual workers prove to be among the most disappointed group of young people as well as individuals coming from households earning just enough money for basic needs, food and clothes. Again, persons with disabilities demonstrate a very negative drop of image of the European Union as well as, surprisingly, people from the migrant/refugee backgrounds that otherwise hold a very positive image about the integration. All in all, we could also say that the persons being sceptical and opposed to the European Union just got more reserved and negative about it. At the same time, people holding positive, but realist views of the European Union also tend to be more disappointed with the ways things evolved over the last year. This should raise concerns and trigger action, particularly from the actors young Europeans trust the most when it comes to information about the European Union: national media and European Union leaders (see Flash Eurobarometer 2021).

3.3 Section summary

Voting is still one of the most extensively exercised modes of political participation as well as perceived to be one of the most effective ones. This is valid also for European elections and European Union politics. It is also clear that, as a rule, election turnout figures continuously suffer more for European than for national or sub-national elections. There are many reasons for not voting (understaning of European Union politics, nature of political competition, distant nature of Brussels' politics etc.), however, the reasons for voting also reveal important information. The main one is still

the perception that voting is an individual's responsibility, part of citizens' duties. Additional reasons for voting indicate ambition to act effectively (control of the authorities, opposing alternatives) as well as being represented. This view is particularly seen within younger cohorts while the older groups of young people demonstrate more voting out of duty behaviour.

The propensity to vote is clearly higher with the ones holding a positive image of the European Union. Closely connected to trust, the positive image of the European Union is also connected to a positive experience with participation in the European project since a vast majority of the ones reporting participation at European elections also report a very positive image of it and vice versa. The ones holding opposing view to the idea of the European Union also abstain from the European elections the most. However, when it comes to moderate and clear supporters of the European Union there is not much difference in their propensity to vote, which particularly signals lack of factors triggering participation at the European elections since there is a large pool of potential voters positive about the European project that somehow do not show up at the polls. The ones holding the more positive view of the European Union are young males, ethnic, religious, sexual minorities and particularly persons with a migrant/refugee background, while persons coming from low-income households and persons holding an occupational status tend to be more reserved towards the European Union.

The current trends of enthusiasm about the European Union are not positive. There are more than a third of those who report that their image of the European Union got worse over the last year while there are only one sixth of those who report a better image. Particularly disappointed are the young Europeans between 26 - 30 years of age and the ones having the lowest level of education. Generally speaking, the persons being sceptical and opposed to the European Union just got more reserved and negative about it. At the same time, people holding positive, but realist views of the European Union also tend to be more disappointed with the ways things evolved over the last year.

4. Communication and information

This section addresses two questions

- How can youth democracy initiatives at EU level best reach out to young people using communication strategies?
- What are the different needs and expectations for EU related information amongst young people?

4.1 Communications strategies

The EP Youth Survey results on information sources on political and social issues (see figure 5, this report) suggest that social media and digital approaches should form the central feature of communications campaigns but cannot be the only channel used. Traditional media still plays a role for many young people. The importance of discussion with friends and family highlighted by these results suggests the potential for peer-to-peer community-based education strategies. These forms of intervention have been widely used in health promotion initiatives targeted at young people (see Green 2001). The low proportion of young people considering school/college/university an important source of information on political topics in the EP Youth Survey (see figure 5 ,this report) reflects frequent claims in youth consultation that citizenship education in schools is poor and in need of radical reform (Moxon and Pantea 2021). There is potentially an argument for any European democracy outreach programme to contribute in some way to improving this situation, for instance by providing lesson plans and resources to schools. Improved citizenship education is strongly desired by young people across Europe (Moxon and Pantea 2021).

The EP Youth Survey results also confirms what is well established in research on digitalisation and young people; social media and the internet play a hugely significant and growing role in young people's lives and form an important source of information on many topics (Norquist 2018). In 2019, 94% of young people aged 16-29 in the EU-27 used the internet daily with 84% participating in social networks (Eurostat, 2020). To that end it is unsurprising that 41% of young people are using social media and news websites to get most of their information on political sources (EP Youth Survey, see figure 5 this report). An important addition to the EP Youth Survey findings is that accessing these sources via mobile phone is increasingly more common amongst young people than access via computer (Eurostat 2020).

The use of social media and news websites for political information does not seem to be affected by country-based patterns of internet usage amongst young people. The EP Youth Survey indicates

considerable variation by country in terms of the percentage of young people who get most of their political information from social media or news websites. These do not match general patterns of internet and social media usage amongst young people across EU-27 Countries. Figure 10 compares the EP Youth Survey results to Eurostat data on the percentage of young people who use social media and the internet (daily) in 2020. It shows that the percentage of young people who see the internet and social media as their most important source of information in each country, does not seem to be affected by the percentage of young people who are using the internet and social media in each country. This indicates that country-based variations in social media and news website usage for political information are likely to be influenced by other factors, such as national politics or perceptions of quality of information sources (see European Commission, 2017). There are legitimate policy concerns that young people in some EU countries have less digital access than others (Serban et al 2020). However, it seems that the effectiveness of EU wide political communications campaigns may not be heavily influenced by variations in digital access and usage between countries.

Figure 10. Young people's digital source of political information compared to internet usage by country (EU-27)
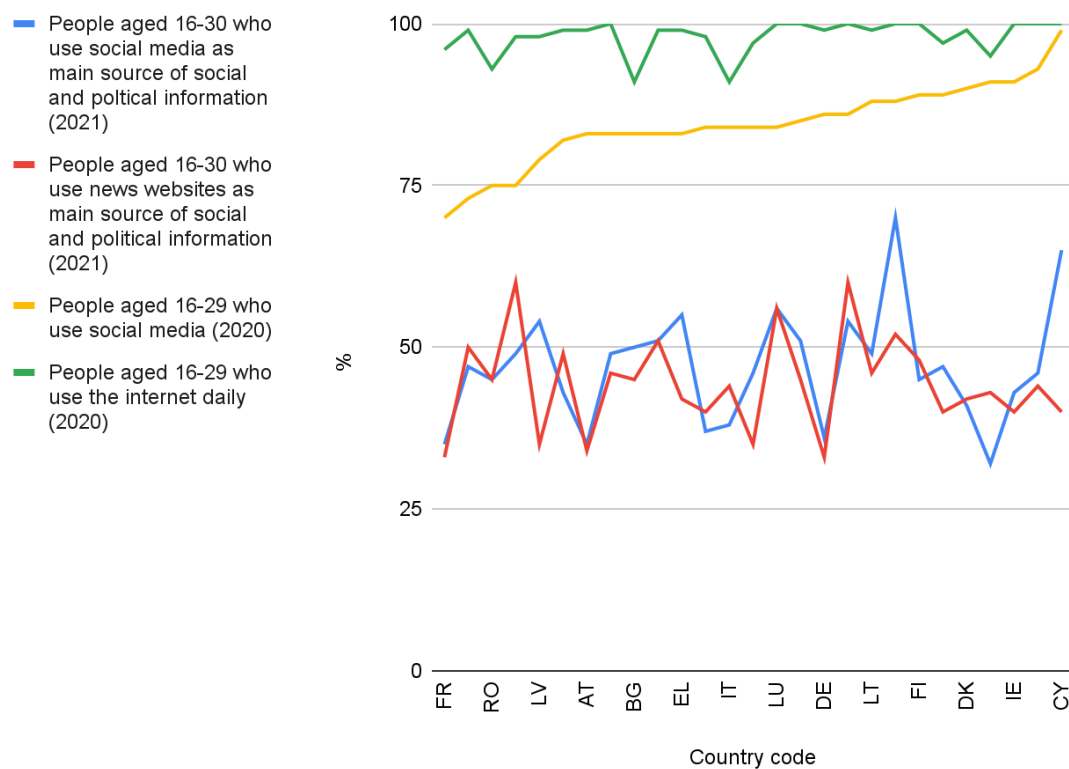
Source: EP Youth Survey (2021), Eurostat (2021a) and Eurostat (2021b). Eurostat Data for FR substituted with 2019 data.

There are still patterns of exclusion that are important to consider in any digital communications approaches (Vartanova and Gladkova, 2019). Youth digital communications strategies particularly when conducted in English, may have challenges reaching more marginalised social groups of young people. These groups might be assumed to have more limited digital access and be less likely to use languages other than their mother-tongue regularly. Research on youth digital exclusion (e.g. Serban et al. 2020, Norqvist 2018) indicates growing concerns that some social groups of young people are becoming excluded by digital engagement approaches. Although the exact patterns of digital exclusion are not fully known, it is argued that young people with disabilities, in financially weaker situations, with lower education, those with fewer language skills and in some rural areas are more likely to have limited digital access (Serban et al 2020). The EP Youth Survey findings (p.45) on political information sources supports this argument, indicating students and those in more affluent households use social media more heavily. The EP Youth Survey finding on young people's language abilities indicates that between 9 and 49% of young people in each EU country don't speak English well enough to have a conversation. Findings from the European Youth Dialogue Consultation (Moxon and Pantea 2021) identify a call from young people to have greater access to political information in their native languages. It can also be understood that the dominance of majority languages in digital spaces is a source of exclusion for young people from minority linguistic backgrounds (Panigrahi, 2021). Thus, digital engagement strategies risk bypassing a small but notable group of already marginalised young people.

Data on which social media platforms are most commonly used by young people, either in general or for political information is not common in academic literature. This makes the data in EP Youth Survey on the usage of social media channels (Figure 11) relatively unique and valuable.

Figure 11. From which social media channels do you get most of your information on political and social issues? (% - EU27)

EU27 average

Channel	%
Facebook	54%
Instagram	48%
Youtube	35%
Twitter	29%
Tik tok	14%
Whatsapp	10%
Reddit	5%
Signal	1%
Other social media channels	9%
Don't know	2%
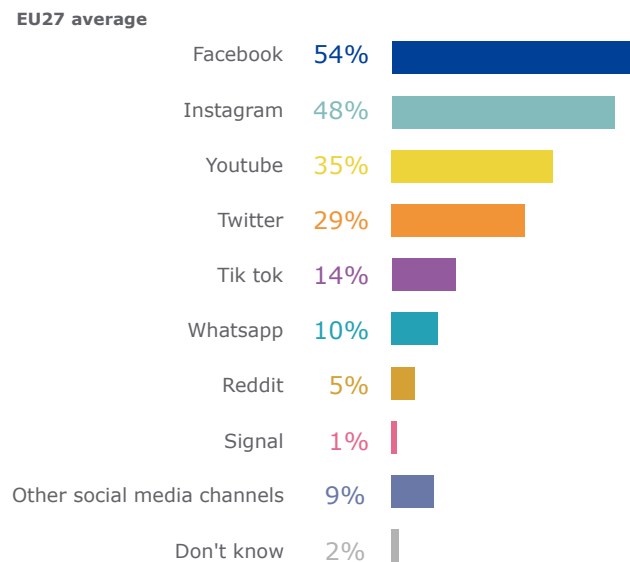
Source: EP Youth Survey (2021)

This data provides a solid foundation for targeting digital communications campaigns. It indicates that these campaigns are likely to require use of a range of social media channels and country specific targeting approaches. Detailed data on young people's social media usage is not publicly released by social media corporations. However, EP Youth Survey (Figure 11) seems to reflect the limited public data that is available about general demographic patterns of social media usage. Here it is understood that Facebook and Instagram have the most extensive penetration and usage patterns of vary by gender, age and country (e.g. Sprout Social, 2021, Statsi.com 2021). The speed at which platform usages may change may give the EP Youth Survey data a limited shelf life. For example, TikTok has only existed in its current form since 2017 and is already identified as being the most important social media channel for political information for 14% of young people (Figure 11). Repeating the EP Youth Survey on a regular basis my prove to be an invaluable source of information for many areas of youth policy, allowing access to updated data and the identification of digital usage trends.

Any digital campaigns need to understand the variety of different repertoires young people have around social media use and democracy. The way young people use the internet for political means is by no means uniform (Keating and Melis, 2017). Communication strategies consider the full range of ways young people engage with democracy online and avoid accidentally limiting themselves to only 'information giving'. Ekstrom and Ostram (2015) theorise three forms of internet use related to youth democratic engagement, summed up as follows:

1. **Information** - Consumption of news and similar information to stay informed on social or political topics.

2. **Interaction** - Discussion with other users, brands, and organisations about social and political topics, for instance through comment threads.

3. **Creative production** - Young people's creation of content such as YouTube or Tik Tik videos, to express one's opinions on a social or political issue to others.

There is evidence to indicate communication strategies which focus on interactive modes, may be more effective at driving young people's democratic engagement. It is argued that more interactive modes of political social media and internet use are more likely to be linked with greater political engagement amongst young people (Ekstrom and Shetata, 2018, Xenos et al 2014). Although it is not necessarily clear that engaging politically online *causes* increased political engagement offline (Boulianne, 2015). Despite this, a focus on more interactive methods both increase the possibilities of ways the political and public institutions have to interact with young people, reflects the range of online habits young people have, and may even lead to more impact. Returning to questions of which social media channels are most effective for communication with young people. It must be considered which platforms can be e*ffectively used to create interaction* with as well as which are the most popular. This will relate to the technological limitations of each platform, the user culture surrounding it, and the expertise and resources supporting any communications campaign.

4.2. Types of information desired

European Youth Dialogue consultations with young people (Moxon and Pantea, 2021) provide an overview on the sorts of information young people request to encourage their democratic participation. This consultation identified that there is a desire from many young people for:

1. Better access to political information materials that are accessible, age appropriate, and enable young people to monitor and be aware of political processes.

2. An increase in the amount of 'Youth friendly' information, particularly about EU topics and institutions. Format of information should be creative and diverse to include visuals, factsheets, videos, or podcasts.

3. Greater access to more information that is considered 'relevant' to young people, reliable, and trustworthy

4. A desire from many young people for public bodies, particularly at EU level to communicate more transparently about their workings and how policy decisions are made. Including opportunities for young people to influence them, and the outcomes of them.

The question of what is 'relevant' to young people, and how transparency might be increased suggests there is a choice, for any democracy outreach programmes about the purpose of information and communication strategies. This relates to whether information should focus on current political topics and debates (such as bill passing through National Parliaments or European Parliament), or on communicating how democracy functions (explaining parliamentary procedures etc.). It is widely established that young people are motivated by cause based politics, and demotivated by institutional politics (Sloam, 2016, Barta et al forthcoming). Therefore, prioritising information about current/controversial political topics and debates currently within the political sphere may increase youth engagement more than information about the procedural functioning of democratic institutions. This would especially be the case if the topics were closely linked to the political priorities of young people (EP Youth Survey see Figure 8, this report). However, prioritising only popular topics may not be effective for increasing transparency. The latter requires information on both political processes and a wide range of topics. But this focus may be less likely to increase youth engagement, at least in the short term. When planning information and communication campaigns, it may be useful to draw a distinction between these two approaches.

It is too simplistic to produce political youth information on the assumption young people are proactively searching for and consuming information about EU politics. Social media use and participation have a much more complex relationship (Xenos et al 2014). The EP Youth Survey segmentation analysis indicates there are a wide range of knowledge levels, attitudes, and values towards EU politics towards young people. In this, there are many who are not currently seeking to engage in political life, either as a whole, or specifically with politics linked to institutions. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that all young people are actively seeking or searching for information about the EU and EU politics. Though it may be the case for some, this behaviour requires at least an international motivation and desire to engage with European political issues or institutions. This can also be linked to research on youth information behaviour. This body of work is limited, particularly in relation to political engagement, but it illustrates that young people have a wide range of information behaviours. This can include purposeful or active engagement, unintentional or passive behaviours, passive information acquisition which encompasses passive search and passive attention, and even deferring information seeking and information avoidance (see Kolaric et al 2018).

A possible response to this by the European level democracy outreach work might be youth information based around 'content funnelling'. This is a tool originally developed in commercial marketing, but now being used in non-profit campaigns to understand the way marketing can move people from being uninterested in a political cause to being engaged in one (see Kihlström ND). It assumes most of the audience is uninterested in a product or cause, and informational campaigns must motivate them through a series of stages in order for a proportion of the audience to eventually 'buy-in' and take some action. These stages are planned out in advance as part of the campaign. Content funnelling is based on the principle that more complex informational content (such as leaflets and websites) has more potential to influence behaviour. However, complex content is unlikely to be consumed until the audience has built up interest from simpler more passively consumable content (Colicev et. al 2019). This simple motivational informational content, such as tweets and Instagram posts, are used as a starting point for a campaign. This initial content builds interest amongst the audience and 'funnels' a smaller proportion of them to more complex content, such as YouTube videos, which requires more commitment to consume. This in turn might funnel audiences to another stage with even more in depth content and so on. Eventually, the audience member is sufficiently engaged to take an action which is suggested to them by the content. For example, in the context of the outreach work linked to European Parliament, the suggested action could be something like contacting an MEP, voting in an election, or signing up for a European Parliament event.

4.3 Delivering communications and information campaigns when trust in European democracy is low

Young people's trust in political institutions is a key part of their relationship with European democracy, and increasing trust in democratic institutions is a key enabler for young people's participation (see Section 2.5). As well as this it is important to consider the impact that low trust in democratic institutions has on the way young people perceive communication and information campaigns. The EP Youth Survey results (figure 12) on trust in information sources indicate that no matter what information source is delivering political information, at least three quarters of young people may not trust that source.

Figure 12: Which of the following, if any, would you trust to give you information about issues facing Europe? (% - EU27)

EU27 average

Source	%
The media in your country	25%
Friends, family or colleagues	23%
European Union leaders	23%
The government in your country	21%
Teachers/tutors/lecturers	18%
Charities/campaign groups	14%
Online bloggers or influences that you follow	11%
Opposition politicians	10%
Business leaders	9%
Celebrities such as musicians, actors and TV personalities	9%
Someone else	5%
None of these	10%
Don't know	9%

Source EP Youth Survey (2021)

This data can be further supplemented by data from Eurobarometer 460 (European Commission, 2017) which indicates that 26% of 15-24 year olds do not trust social media as an information source. The issue of lack of trust in political information can be set within wider research illustrating low levels of trust young people have in political institutions, democracy and political figures. (Ellison et al 2020, Foa 2020, Kwak et al 2020, Sloam 2016 ,Moxon and Pantea 2021) and the increasing impact of information disorder (fake news and related issues) on democracy (Wardle and Derksham, 2017). This is reflected in the EP Youth Survey results. This indicates less than a third of young people are in favour of the EU and satisfied with the way it is working (q12), less than half have a positive image of the EU (q13) and approaching a third say this image has worsened over the past year (q14). Lack of trust is connected to another common theme in academic literature - that many young people do not believe institutional politics listen to or respond to young people (Sloam 2016, Moxon and Pantea 2021, Barta et al forthcoming). The EP Youth Survey results reflects this, illustrating that more than half of young people do not believe voting is an effective action, and over three quarters do not believe contacting a politician is effective (see Figure 3).

Trust in messaging and communication channels will be a significant challenge for communication campaigns. Outreach or communications campaigns coming from The European Parliament 'brand', the EU 'Brand', or even the 'brand' of European representative democracy need assume that:

- The majority of young people the campaign is trying to engage may not trust the information they are receiving

- A substantial number of young people may have a negative or mistrustful view of a 'brand' linked to European political institutions.

Outreach and communication programmes need to build trust in European political institutions. However, at the same time, they come from a very challenging position of low trust when trying to engage young people. One solution might be to resource partner organisations to run campaigns instead, allowing them to be the lead 'brand'. However, the low trust in teachers, influencers, campaign groups, business and celebrities (q16) suggest finding suitable organisational partners might be challenging. Another solution might be to focus on developing cause-based campaign brands (such as those described above) that are not strongly linked to any specific organisation. This effectively mirrors some of the successful strategies of the 'youth' climate change movement, where the 'cause' forms the main focus of communications and branding, without a strong presence of organisational branding (Boulianne et al 2020).

4.4 Section summary

It is clear that the engagement of young people in European democracy requires a modern communication approach based strongly around social media. However, simply placing information about the European Parliament on the most popular social media channels is unlikely to be effective. Instead, communications and information work needs to focus on demonstrating relevance of European politics to young people's lives, and building trust in European politics as a whole. To be effective communication needs to be persuasive, moving young people from passive incidental information consumption to active engagement, in both communication campaigns and ultimately politics.

5. Youth outreach programmes

This section addresses the questions

- How can we target different programme contents and experiences to different youth segments or make programmes more inclusive / accessible to a broader youth audience?
- Do youth programmes have any impact on political participation?

5.1 Comparative impact of youth programme methods

There is limited research on the impact of youth programmes on young people, and especially on their political participation. Notable examples of research on the impact of face-to-face programmes are the RAY-MON study (Böhler et al 2021) on the Erasmus+ Youth programmes and Ord et al (2018) on youth work. These broadly indicate that non-formal education programmes can be successful in promoting young people's citizenship and participation There is no detailed comparative evaluation of the various range of non-formal methods available.

Research on citizenship education is slightly more extensive (see e.g. Campbell 2009, Crick et al 2014, Geboers et al 2013, Donbavand, and Hoskins 2021). This work focuses on schools, but increasingly includes youth programs. The research tends to suggest that participatory and non-formal learning is more effective than formal learning, though this is debated (see, Dassonneville et al., 2012). Some research even indicates that citizenship education can have a negative effect (Garcia-Albacete 2013; Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz et al. 2017), particularly when young people learn more about the political system and become sceptical of it. It is suggested that citizenship education which develops knowledge of politics may not have an impact on young people's political participation, unless accompanied by shifts in attitudes and values (see Donbavand and Hoskins, 2021). This supports the EP Youth Survey segmentation analysis indicating that some young people have good levels of political knowledge but can still show lower levels of political participation. A framework for further considering distinction between knowledge, skills and values may be the Council of Europe's (2018) Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.

Impact research on digital youth engagement programmes particularly is almost non-existent (Pawluczuk et al 2019, Pawluczuk et al 2020). Although it is argued interactive methods might lead to more effective digital outreach (Ekstrom and Shetata, 2018, Xenos et al 2014), overall, there is limited evidence that can be used to understand how effective digital engagement around young people and democracy can be conducted. It would be valuable for any digital engagement strategy conducted by the European Parliament to be rigorously evaluated.

Across all areas of research, when considering the effectiveness of methods, the relevant studies do not take into account the operational and policy challenges of delivering large scale outreach programmes. The costs per head between methods are also not compared. Existing evaluations typically assess the impact on the individual participants, regardless of the costs and challenges of implementing a programme with these methods. Cost per head analysis, is advisable, even when conducted on a crude basis. The impact of any attempt to creating society wide change in young people's democratic engagement is limited by the number of young people affected, which in turn is limited by the resourced available.

5.2 Outreach and targeting of youth programmes

Youth programme outreach is a question of inclusiveness, scale, resources, and impact. On one level, outreach simply follows expenditure and resources. Larger programmes with more activity reach more young people, and they reach the communities and young people to whom resources are directed. However, engagement with young people is of little value if there is no impact. Assessing outreach asks, in the resources available, what is the most effective way for a programme to have an impact on young people? This then requires judgement of which social groups of young people and what proportion of the youth population the youth programme would need to reach or target to have the desired level of impact.

It is not possible to identify who are 'the typical participants' that get involved in youth participation-based youth programmes. Although there is a perception that European level youth programs focused on political participation are not always inclusive of people from a diverse range of social backgrounds and focus on a 'Brussels bubble' (Day et. al 2014). However, there is no systematic comparison or measurement of inclusiveness across youth programmes, and individual youth programmes committed to working inclusively have very much demonstrated the ability to do so (Pirvulescu et al 2019). Diversity monitoring within The European Youth Dialogue for example, has demonstrated a very high degree of inclusiveness and social representation, engaging young people from a range of backgrounds (Moxon and Pantea 2021).

The ability of specific programmes to engage with young people from marginalised backgrounds is said to be improved by (Steinprinz, 2019):
- Flexible formats,
- Dedicated resources and support to meet accessibility requirements,

- Simple language and communication,
- Removal of financial and administrative barriers,
- Skilled/ trained staff or volunteers, supporting for participants,
- Promotion and outreach to target marginalised communities, particularly through existing networks.
- Delivering programmes within target communities, at local level.

Who participates in a youth programme is dependent on what steps the youth programme takes to be accessible, who it is targeted at, where it takes places, and how recruitment and outreach is conducted.

More can be said about the general patterns of political engagement amongst young people. This might indicate which groups of young people are likely to show an inherent interest in youth programmes based around participation. Youth political participation is understood to vary with socio demographic factors; gender, class and education all strongly related to levels of political participation (Ellison et al 2020). People with higher incomes, higher education, children of parents with higher education and socio-economic status are typically more likely to participate in politics and political organisations (Flanagan and Levine 2010, Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba and Nie 1972, Rosenstone and Hansen 2002). Patterns and styles of participation vary between male and female genders, though there is some debate about how (Barta et al forthcoming, Beauregard 2014; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010, Childs 2004). Within the EU young people from newer democracies are also less likely to be politically engaged (Kitanova, 2020). And of course, those under 18 are often formally prevented from participating in voting and other aspects of citizenship (see Larkins 2014). The EP Youth Survey findings confirm these patterns of participation, especially on the topic of class. Across the EP Youth Survey findings, with some variation it is indicated that understanding of the EU, likelihood of discussing politics frequently, perceptions of the efficacy of voting, likelihood of voting, and positive attitudes to the EU all increase with financial security, levels of education, and levels of parental education. Gendered and country-based differences in patterns of participation are also identified throughout the report.

If European Parliament youth programmes wish to focus their outreach on the social groups least likely to be engaged in political participation, both the EYPS report and the existing data strongly suggest a focus on young people from lower socio-economic groups. An obvious way to achieve this would be geographic targeting of deprived communities and regions. This could mean building up partnerships with municipalities and schools in these areas. These partners could be used to both deliver programmes, and recruit for them. In this approach it might be advisable to avoid

universities as partners. Their students would have higher educational levels and fall outside of the target group. Alongside this advertising and communication activities could be directed at these regions. This approach would be similar to the Council of Europe's Enter! Programme (COE, 2021).

However, the most 'effective' outreach method might be strongly determined by scale, implementation costs and potential delivery partners available. Any EU institution seeking to impact the way young people across Europe engage with democracy, needs to reach substantial numbers of young people. It can likely only do so with significant partnerships. Each youth programme method (formal, non-formal, digital) is linked to a particular system of organisations and actors, with their own strengths and challenges (Council of Europe, 2020). There may simply be more opportunities to reach large numbers of young people through collaboration with formal education systems or digital approaches., even though participatory and non-formal methods may be more impactful on participants. Similarly, reaching large numbers of young people might have more impact overall, that targeting intensively at the least engaged young people.

In this context when working with delivery partner to implement outreach programmes, it can be considered that:

- Schools focused, formal education systems are based on the compulsory participation of (nearly) all young people, highly standardised at national level and reasonably well resourced. Embedding outreach programmes in national curriculums can have significant reach, and consistent standardised delivery. The compulsory nature of primarily and secondary programmes means many of those who are politically disinterested are obliged to participate.

- The non-formal education sector is much less resourced in contrast. It is based on voluntary participation of young people, and not standardised. It can be assumed to have a much smaller reach compared to the formal education sector. The non-compulsory nature of programmes can lead to a bias, whereby those who are already politically motivated are more likely to participate. However, the sector's flexibility, and commitment to inclusion also means programmes can be designed to target specific social groups.

- Digital youth engagement requires effective central budgets and strategies for communication. It remains an emerging area of practice which is still in experimentation with youth work (Pawluczuk et al. 2019).

5.3 Section Summary

Overall, it cannot be said that using one method of youth programme and outreach is the most effective in all circumstances. Whilst there is some moderate evidence that participatory and non-formal approaches have more impact on influencing individuals, they may still not be the most effective strategic choice when seeking to influence and reach large populations. The question of who programmes should be targeted at is an ethical and political choice. If the desire is to focus on those young people who are least engaged, targeting deprived geographic committees would be a good option. If the desire is to have maximum impact across the EU, using methods that reach the greatest number of young people, based on the resources and political opportunities available would be the most effective approach.

6 Conclusion

Young people participate less in institutional politics than other age groups as well as cohorts of young people decades ago. However they should not be thought of as politically apathetic since only one tenth of them do not report practicing any of the available forms of political action.

When it comes to potential reasons for young people's reduced participation in institutional politics, there is an important disconnect of young people from authorities at various levels. This is more extreme at the European level than the national or local level. Two thirds of young people feel they have little or no voice over the important decisions, laws and policies of the European Union. As a rule, election turnout figures continuously suffer more for European than for national or sub-national elections. There are many reasons for not voting (lack of understanding of European Union politics, nature of political competition, distant nature of Brussels' politics etc.), however, the reasons for voting also reveal important information. The main one is still the belief that voting is a strong part of an individual's responsibility, part of citizens' duties. Additional reason for voting is also a perception that this is still the main tool of influencing governments and controlling competing interests. This view is particularly seen within younger cohorts while the older groups of young people demonstrate more voting out of duty behaviour.

The propensity to vote is clearly higher amongst young people holding a positive image of the European Union. A vast majority of the young people reporting participation at European elections also report a very positive image of it and vice versa. The ones holding opposing view to the idea of the European Union also abstain from the European elections the most. However, when it comes to moderate and clear supporters of the European Union there is not much difference in their propensity to vote, which particularly signals lack of factors triggering participation at the European elections since there is a large pool of potential voters positive about the European project that somehow do not show up at the polls.

So young people's political participation, as well as being influenced by their belief in the European project, is also influenced by their perception of the effectiveness of political action they engage into. And whilst they still believe that voting is the most effective strategy of raising a voice, they believe they have limited influence on institutional politics overall. Thus they also turn to street protests and demonstrations, which is a clear sign of the relevance of protest politics among the European youth. In line with that, they are also prone to join loose networks for social action and perform communication and political action heavily through social media and other online tools.

Thus the relevance of social media as information sources is clear and tops the list of information sources.

It is clear then, that outreach strategies to engage young people' in European democracy, need to focus on demonstrating relevance of European politics to young people's lives, and building trust and belief in European politics as a whole. This is a challenge, outreach work coming from European institutions themselves will likely be seen as lacking relevance and even untrustworthy by some young people. Thus there is a strong value to focusing on messaging about political causes and issues rather than institutions and processes. Simplifying education and informing young people about the functions of democratic processes, whilst beneficial, is unlikely to have a strong impact on behaviour. To be effective outreach needs to be persuasive, and show how causes that young people care about are shaped by European democracy.

Based on existing research it cannot be said that using one method of youth programme and outreach is the most effective in all circumstances. Whilst there is some moderate evidence that participatory and non-formal approaches have more impact on influencing individuals, they may still not be the most effective strategic choice when seeking to influence and reach large populations. If the desire is to focus on those young people who are least engaged, targeting deprived geographic committees with small scale participatory methods would be a good option. However if the desire is to have maximum impact across the EU, using methods that reach the greatest number of young people, large scale communication campaigns or embedding topics with school curriculums might be more effective.

As part of operating at scale, the engagement of young people in European democracy is likely to require a modern communication approach based strongly around social media. However, simply placing information about the European Parliament on the most popular social media channels is unlikely to be effective. Communications and information campaigns need to reach a wide number of young people, moving them from passive dis-interest to active engagement. There is a need to creator motivating campaigns that move young people who lack trust in, or are sceptical about politics, into passionate, or at least moderate believers.

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Appendix

Table 1: When you get together with friends or relatives, how often, if at all do you discuss political and social issues...?

	EU27	Male	Female	In another way / Prefer not to say	16 - 19 years	20 - 25 years	26 - 30 years
FREQUENTLY	4457	2526	1898	32	901	1838	1718
	25%	27%	22%	29%	20%	26%	26%
OCCASSIONALLY	10988	5538	5393	58	2627	4274	4088
	61%	60%	61%	52%	58%	60%	62%
NEVER	2381	1040	1323	18	874	846	662
	13%	11%	15%	16%	19%	12%	10%
DON'T KNOW	330	156	171	3	126	118	85
	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Table 2: And in your opinion, which three of the following values are most important?

	EU27	male	female	In another way / prefer not to say	16 - 19 years	20 - 25 years	26 - 30 years
The protection of human rights and democracy	56%	52%	60%	61%	53%	55%	58%
Freedom of speech	48%	49%	47%	25%	51%	47%	48%
Gender equality	38%	29%	48%	55%	43%	38%	34%
Solidarity with weaker members of society	19%	21%	18%	16%	16%	19%	22%
Solidarity between people	36%	34%	38%	31%	34%	35%	39%
Solidarity between European union member states	15%	19%	11%	20%	14%	15%	16%
Solidarity between the european union and poor countries around the world	16%	18%	14%	14%	16%	17%	15%
The protection of minority groups	18%	17%	19%	34%	20%	19%	16%
Gettting rid of the death penalty throughout the world	13%	13%	13%	12%	14%	13%	11%
None of these	2%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Table 3: From which of these sources do you get most of your information on political and social issues?

Please select up to three responses.

Q15b And from which social media channels do you get most of your information on political and social issues? Please select up to th
Base: If "Social Media" at Q15a (Q15a.3=1)

	EU27	Gender			Age			Eligible to vote in 2019		Education (End of)			
	EU27	Male	Female	In another way / Prefer not to say	16 - 19 years	20 - 25 years	26 - 30 years	No	Yes	Up to 15	16-19	20+	Still studying
		(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
Base: Total	7987	3573	4345	69	1564	3537	2886	1516	6471	129	1623	2656	3000
Base: Weighted Total	7459	3489	3905	65	2022	3005	2432	1975	5484	114	1457	2236	3122
Facebook	3997 54%	1809 52% C	2164 55% A C	23 36%	749 37%	1562 52% A	1685 69% A B	730 37%	3267 60% A	68 60% D	882 61% D	1451 65% B D	1366 44%
Twitter	2157 29%	1077 31% B	1055 27%	25 39%	644 32% C	946 32% C	567 23%	635 32% B	1522 28%	21 18%	307 21%	630 28% B	1092 35% A B C
Youtube	2607 35%	1533 44% B	1050 27%	23 36%	776 38% B C	1032 34%	799 33%	757 38% B	1849 34%	36 32%	525 36%	756 34%	1089 35%
Instagram	3595 48%	1490 43%	2071 53% A	34 52%	1297 64% B C	1463 49% C	834 34%	1263 64% B	2332 43%	52 46%	676 46% C	851 38%	1772 57% B C
Whatsapp	746 10%	437 13% B	304 8%	6 9%	154 8%	273 9%	320 13% A B	148 8%	598 11% A	23 21% B C D	143 10%	257 12% D	244 8%
Reddit	378 5%	289 8% B	83 2%	6 9% B	95 5%	170 6%	113 5%	92 5%	286 5%	15 13% B C D	60 4%	114 5%	155 5%
Tik tok	1031 14%	418 12%	597 15% A	16 24% A	499 25% B C	367 12% C	165 7%	488 25% B	543 10%	30 27% B C D	205 14% C	175 8%	500 16% C
Signal	82 1%	48 1%	34 1%	0 0%	16 1%	34 1%	32 1%	16 1%	66 1%	0 0%	15 1%	21 1%	29 1%
Other social media channels	677 9%	322 9%	346 9%	9 13%	167 8%	277 9%	233 10%	162 8%	515 9%	13 11%	145 10% D	201 9%	239 8%
Don't know	119 2%	50 1%	69 2%	0 0%	29 2%	41 1%	49 2%	29 2%	90 2%	1 1%	23 2%	32 2%	50 2%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Figure 1: You said you have not voted in the last local, national or European election. What, if anything, has prevented you from doing this? (% - EU27)
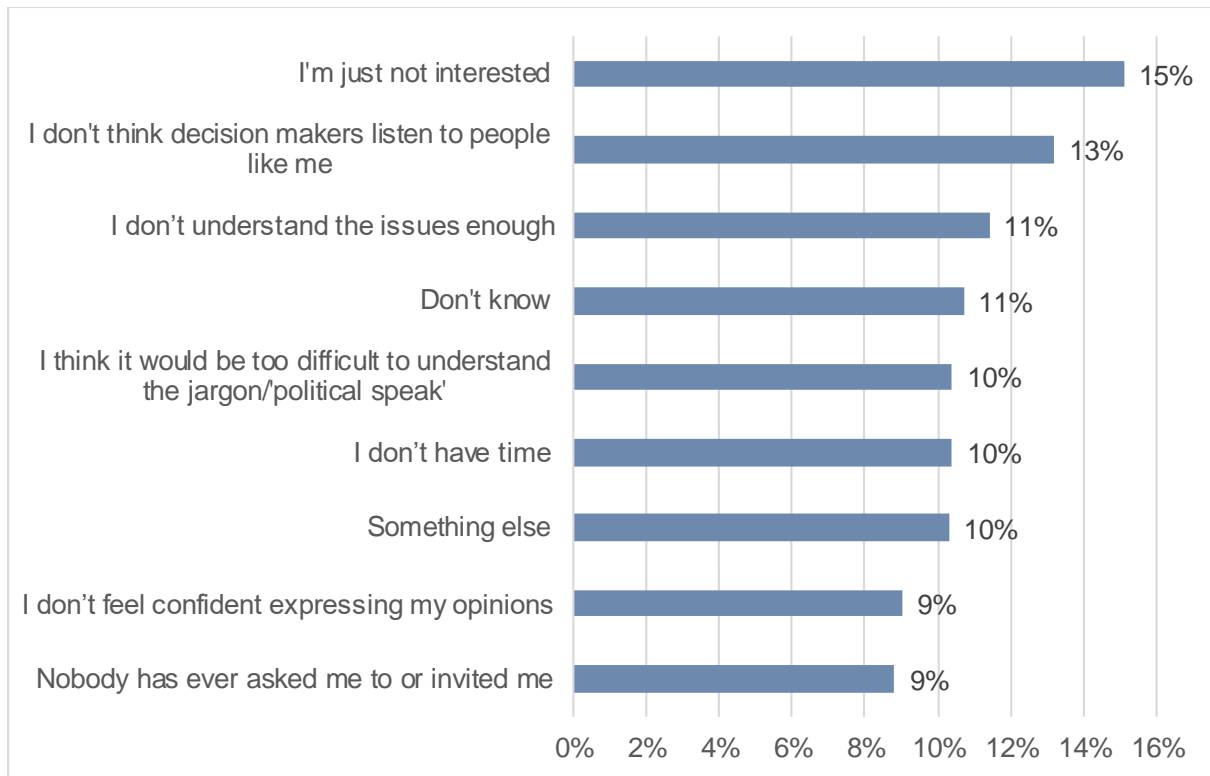
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Figure 2: Did you vote in the last European Elections in May 2019? "Yes" (% - EU27)
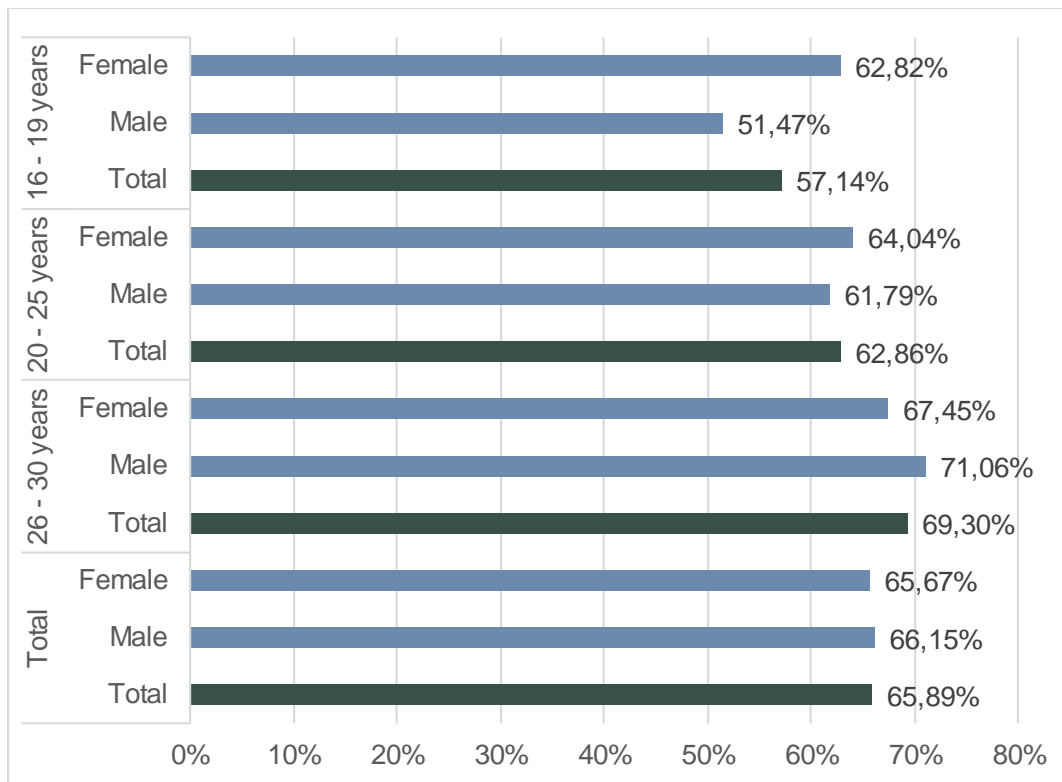
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Table 4: In general, do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the European Union? (%)

	EU27	Gender		Financial situation household						Type of respondent				
	EU27	Male	Female	In another way / Prefer not to say	Not enough money for basic bills	Enough money for basic bills but not for food and clothes	Enough money for food, clothes and shoes but not enough for more expensive things	Can afford to buy some more expensive things but not as expensive as a car or new house for example	Can afford to buy whatever we need for a good standard of living	Ethnic, religious or other minority	Migrant, refugee, asylum seeker or displaced person	Person with a disability/disabilities	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex	None of the above
Very positive	10%	12%	8%	8%	25%	12%	9%	8%	11%	18%	22%	12%	10%	8%
Fairly positive	34%	34%	35%	41%	22%	30%	30%	39%	42%	32%	33%	29%	36%	36%
Neutral	37%	33%	41%	29%	33%	36%	40%	36%	34%	35%	28%	34%	35%	38%
Fairly negative	10%	12%	9%	11%	8%	13%	12%	10%	8%	8%	9%	14%	10%	10%
Very negative	5%	6%	3%	5%	7%	7%	6%	4%	3%	5%	5%	8%	5%	4%
Don't know	4%	4%	5%	6%	5%	3%	4%	3%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	3%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Table 5: Which of the following statements regarding the European Union is closest to your opinion? (%)

		I'm in favour of the European Union and the way it is working at present	I'm rather in favour of the European Union, but not the way it is working at present	I'm rather sceptical of the European Union, but could change my opinion if the way it works was really changed	I'm opposed to the idea of the European Union in general	Don't know
EU27	EU27	28%	34%	21%	5%	12%
Age	16 - 19 years	30%	31%	20%	5%	16%
	20 - 25 years	29%	35%	22%	4%	11%
	26 - 30 years	26%	36%	22%	6%	11%
Education (End of)	Up to 15	21%	34%	28%	9%	9%
	16-19	25%	31%	25%	7%	13%
	20+	28%	37%	21%	5%	9%
	Still studying	32%	35%	18%	4%	12%
Respondent occupation scale	Self-employed	31%	33%	24%	6%	7%
	Employee	27%	37%	22%	5%	10%
	Manual worker	19%	31%	32%	8%	11%
	Not working	31%	33%	17%	4%	15%
Financial situation household	Not enough money for basic bills	34%	28%	21%	7%	10%
	Enough money for basic bills but not for food and clothes	22%	36%	28%	6%	8%
	Enough money for food, clothes and shoes but not enough for more expensive things	22%	35%	27%	5%	10%
	Can afford to buy some more expensive things but not as expensive as a car or new house for example	31%	35%	19%	4%	11%
	Can afford to buy whatever we need for a good standard of living	35%	36%	15%	4%	10%
Type of respondent	Ethnic, religious or other minority	35%	31%	20%	5%	9%
	Migrant, refugee, asylum seeker or displaced person	27%	36%	28%	5%	5%
	Person with a disability/disabilities	22%	34%	31%	6%	7%
	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex	26%	36%	26%	4%	8%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Table 6: Over the last year, would you say that this image you have of the European Union has improved, got worse or stayed about the same? (%)

Q14 Over the last year, would you say that this image you have of the European Union has improved, got worse or stayed about the same?
Base: All

Column groups: **EU27** | **Gender**: Male (A), Female (B), In another way / Prefer not to say (C) | **Age**: 16-19 years (A), 20-25 years (B), 26-30 years (C) | **Eligible to vote in 2019**: No (A), Yes (B) | **Education (End of)**: Up to 15 (A), 16-19 (B), 20+ (C), Still studying (D) | **Respondent occupation scale**: Self-employed (A), Employee (B), Manual worker (C), Not working (D) | **Subjective urbanisation**: Rural area (A), Small/medium-sized town (B), Large town/city (C) | **Device used**: PC/Laptop/Tablet (A), Smartphone (B) | **Highest level of education mother**: No formal education/did not complete primary school (A), Primary school (B), Secondary school (C), Technical or vocational training (D), College or university level education (E) | **Highest level of education father**: No formal education/did not complete primary school (A), Primary school (B), Secondary school (C), Technical or vocational training (D), College or university level education (E) | **Financial situation household**: Not enough money for basic bills (A), Enough money for basic bills but not for food and clothes (B), Enough money for food, clothes and shoes but not enough for more expensive things (C), Can afford to buy some more expensive things but not for more expensive as a car or a new house for (D), Can afford to buy whatever we need for a good standard of living (E) | **Type of respondent**: Ethnic, religious or other minority, Migrant, refugee, asylum seeker or displaced person, Person with a disability/disabilities, Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex, None of the above | **Number of languages you speak**: None (A), One (B), More than one (C) | **EU tribe**: EU Enthusiasts (A), EU Moderates (B), EU Ambivalents (C), EU Sceptics (D)

	EU27	M(A)	F(B)	Oth(C)	16-19(A)	20-25(B)	26-30(C)	No(A)	Yes(B)	Up15(A)	16-19(B)	20+(C)	Still(D)	SelfE(A)	Empl(B)	Man(C)	NotW(D)	Rural(A)	SmTown(B)	LgCity(C)	PC(A)	Smart(B)	MoA	MoB	MoC	MoD	MoE	FaA	FaB	FaC	FaD	FaE	FinA	FinB	FinC	FinD	FinE	Minority	Migrant	Disab	LGBT	NoneAbove	Lang None(A)	Lang One(B)	Lang >1(C)	Enth(A)	Mod(B)	Amb(C)	Scep(D)
Base: Total	18156	8913	9128	115	3318	7832	7006	3204	14952	361	3671	6220	6302	2070	8267	1600	5467	4701	7635	5820	6037	12119	660	1640	5080	3803	5796	415	1477	4598	5056	5069	777	1798	4369	7060	3070	1559	765	1128	2261	11995	485	5401	12270	4561	6437	3280	3030
Base: Weighted Total	18156	9260	8785	111	4528	7076	6552	4421	13735	351	3595	5733	6903	1964	7936	1468	6034	4926	7955	5274	6731	11425	713	1649	4922	4151	5439	452	1452	4383	5295	5007	839	1910	4353	6843	3077	1540	835	1214	2278	11789	557	5994	11605	4356	6400	3347	3077
Improved	2992 17%	1897 21% B	1072 12%	23 21% B	698 15%	1236 18% A	1058 16%	685 15%	2307 17%	76 22% D	605 17%	973 17%	1105 16%	550 28% BCD	1319 17% D	230 16%	825 14%	925 19% BC	1173 15%	894 17% B	1131 17%	1861 16%	294 41% BCDE	351 21% CDE	748 15% D	525 13%	965 18% CD	163 36% BCDE	254 18% D	712 16% D	734 14%	995 20% CD	283 34% BCDE	427 22% CDE	723 17% D	949 14%	525 17% D	447 29%	260 31%	242 20%	417 18%	1672 14%	82 15%	1053 18%	1858 16% C	2020 46% BCD	803 13% CD	163 5% D	0 0%
Got worse	5665 31%	3081 33% B	2561 29%	23 20%	1212 27%	2222 31%	2231 34% AB	1173 27%	4492 33% A	142 41%	1173 33%	1868 33%	1991 29%	650 33% D	2729 34% D	535 37% D	1555 26%	1519 31%	2510 32%	1636 31%	2093 31%	3572 31%	245 34% E	632 38% CDE	1566 32% E	1390 34% E	1534 28%	152 34%	534 37% CDE	1405 32% E	1694 32% E	1486 30%	288 34% DE	790 41% ACDE	1496 34% DE	2030 30%	813 26%	470 31%	333 40%	482 40%	712 31%	3586 30%	175 31%	1997 33% C	3493 30%	0 0%	1395 22% A	1896 57% AB	2328 76% ABC
Stayed about the same	8153 45%	3753 41%	4352 50% A	48 44%	2149 48% BC	3138 44%	2865 44%	2102 48% B	6051 44%	110 31%	1543 43% A	2600 45% A	3283 48% ABC	668 34%	3447 43% AC	584 40% A	3108 52% ABC	2128 43%	3672 46% A	2353 45%	3029 45%	5123 45%	154 22%	588 36% A	2294 47% AB	1962 47% AB	2627 48% AB	116 26%	583 40% A	2001 46% AB	2522 48% AB	2271 45% AB	223 27%	597 31% A	1821 42% A	3472 51% ABC	1573 51% ABC	536 35%	207 25%	418 34%	993 44%	5778 49%	219 39%	2405 40%	5529 48% AB	2252 52% CD	4012 63% ACD	1141 34% D	656 21%
Don't know	1346 7%	529 6%	800 9% A	17 16% AB	470 10% A	480 7%	397 6%	461 10% B	885 6%	22 6%	274 8% C	291 5%	523 8% C	97 5%	440 6%	118 8% AB	546 9% AB	355 7%	600 8%	391 7%	477 7%	870 8%	21 3%	79 5%	314 7%	274 7% AB	313 6%	21 5%	81 6%	265 6%	345 7% E	255 5%	45 5%	96 5%	313 7%	392 6% BDE	166 5%	86 6%	35 4%	72 6%	156 7%	753 6%	82 15% BC	540 9% C	725 6%	84 2%	190 3% A	147 4% ABD	93 3% A

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)