

Workshop on Increasing Youth Political Participation



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Importance of Youth Political Participation

Youth political participation is crucial for a healthy democracy. It ensures that young people's interests are represented, enhances civic responsibility, and empowers them to shape their communities. Engaging youth introduces fresh perspectives, drives social change, and leads to more effective policies. It also helps build social cohesion and addresses inequalities, ensuring a more inclusive and dynamic democratic process.

Objectives of the Workshop

**To understand the barriers
to youth political
participation**

**To explore successful
models and strategies**

**To develop action plans for
increasing youth engagement in
politics**



Importance of Youth Political Participation

Strengthens Democracy: It ensures that the perspectives and needs of younger generations are included in decision-making, making democratic processes more representative and legitimate.

Fosters Civic Responsibility: Engaging in politics helps young people develop a sense of civic duty and responsibility, preparing them for active roles in society.

Drives Innovation: Youth bring new ideas and perspectives, which can lead to innovative solutions for social and political challenges.

Encourages Long-Term Engagement: Early participation establishes habits of involvement, leading to sustained engagement and leadership throughout adulthood.

Enhances Policy Relevance: Including youth in policymaking ensures that policies address their needs and concerns, resulting in more effective and relevant solutions.

Promotes Social Cohesion: Participation helps bridge generational divides and fosters a sense of community and belonging, contributing to social harmony.

Current State of Youth Political Participation in Italy

Youth Representation:

Youth representation in Italian politics remains limited. While there are youth wings within major political parties and youth representatives in local councils, their influence on national policy-making is relatively minor. The lack of representation can contribute to feelings of disengagement among young people.

Youth Movements and Activism:

There is a growing trend of youth activism in Italy, particularly around issues like climate change, social justice, and education. Movements such as Fridays for Future have mobilized large numbers of young people, highlighting their ability to drive social and political discourse outside traditional political structures.

Current State of Youth Political Participation in Italy

Educational Initiatives:

Several programs aim to increase youth political engagement through education. Civic education is included in school curricula, and various non-governmental organizations work to educate young people about their political rights and responsibilities.

Digital Participation:

Italian youth are increasingly using digital platforms to engage in political and social issues. Social media and online campaigns have become important tools for young people to express their views, organize events, and mobilize support for various causes.

Barriers to Youth Political Participation

Socio-Economic Challenges

Economic instability, high unemployment rates, and financial pressures often take precedence over political engagement. Young people facing economic hardships may prioritize immediate financial concerns over participating in political activities.

Lack of Access to Information

Many young people lack access to accurate and comprehensive information about political processes, issues, and opportunities for involvement. This information gap can lead to disengagement and a lack of understanding about how to participate effectively.

Barriers to Youth Political Participation

Political Apathy and Disillusionment

Disillusionment with political institutions and processes can lead to apathy. If young people perceive politics as corrupt or ineffective, they may feel that their participation won't make a difference, leading to disengagement.

Educational System Gaps

Inadequate civic education in schools can result in a lack of awareness about political rights and responsibilities. Without proper education on how political systems work and the importance of participation, young people may be less likely to engage.

Lack of Representation:

A lack of representation in political bodies and decision-making processes can lead to feelings of exclusion. When young people do not see their interests or concerns being addressed, they may feel less motivated to participate.

Digital Divide:

While many young people are digitally savvy, there is still a significant digital divide. Those without reliable internet access or digital skills may struggle to engage in online political activities and discussions.

Social and Cultural Barriers:

Cultural norms and societal expectations can also play a role. In some contexts, youth may face social pressure to conform to traditional roles rather than participate in political activities.

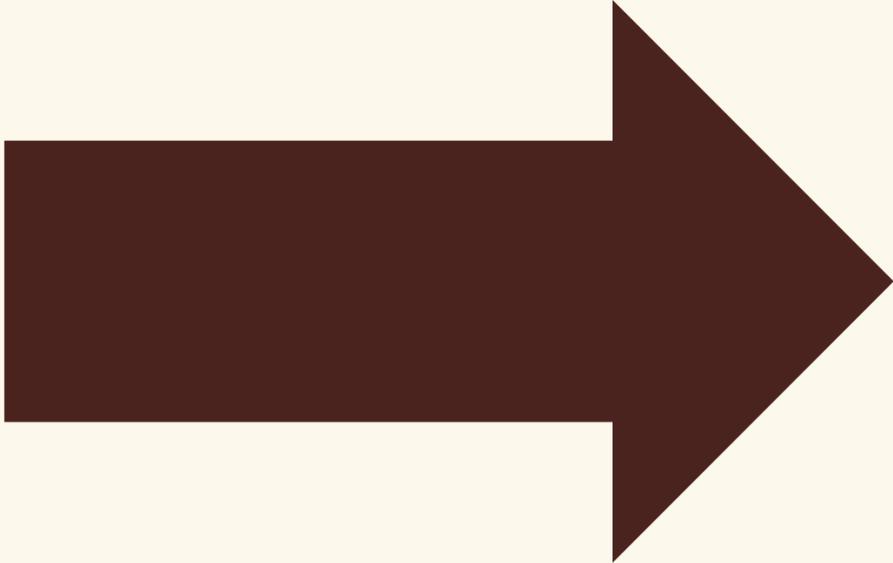
Structural Barriers:

Bureaucratic hurdles and complex procedures for political participation can be discouraging. Youth may find it challenging to navigate these barriers, making participation seem inaccessible.



Successful Models of Youth Political Participation in Europe

European Youth Parliament (EYP)



Overview: The EYP is a non-governmental organization that simulates the European Parliament for young people across Europe. It organizes sessions where youth can debate and discuss current European issues.

Impact: It enhances political awareness, encourages dialogue among diverse youth, and develops skills such as public speaking and negotiation. EYP promotes understanding of European governance and fosters cross-cultural connections.



Local Youth Councils (Finland)

Overview: Finnish municipalities often have local youth councils that consult on and influence local policies affecting young people. These councils typically consist of elected youth representatives.

Impact: They provide a structured way for young people to voice their opinions and participate in local decision-making, increasing youth influence on municipal policies and community projects.

Youth Guarantee (Sweden)

Overview: The Youth Guarantee is a European initiative implemented in Sweden that ensures all young people receive a high-quality offer of employment, education, or training within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving school.

Impact: It has successfully reduced youth unemployment and improved the employability of young people by providing them with necessary skills and opportunities.





Fridays for Future (Germany)

Overview: Initiated by Greta Thunberg, this global climate movement mobilizes young people to demand action on climate change through strikes and demonstrations.

Impact: It has significantly influenced climate policy discussions and raised global awareness about environmental issues, demonstrating the power of youth-led activism.

Strategies for Enhancing Youth Political Participation

Educational Initiatives:

Civic Education: Integrate comprehensive civic education into school curricula to teach young people about political systems, rights, and responsibilities.

Leadership Training: Offer programs that develop leadership skills, public speaking, and critical thinking, preparing youth for active political roles.

Policy and Institutional Support:

Youth Policies: Develop and implement policies that address youth needs and encourage their involvement in decision-making processes.

Youth Councils: Establish youth councils or advisory boards to include young people in local and national policy discussions.

Creating Opportunities for Engagement:

Volunteer Programs: Promote volunteerism and community service, providing young people with opportunities to engage in civic activities.

Youth-Led Initiatives: Support and fund youth-led projects and campaigns, allowing young people to address issues they are passionate about.



Strategies for Enhancing Youth Political Participation

Leveraging Technology:

Digital Platforms: Utilize social media and digital tools to engage youth in political discussions, organize campaigns, and facilitate online consultations.

Digital Literacy: Offer training to improve digital skills, ensuring young people can effectively use technology for political engagement.

Building Inclusive Environments:

Promote Diversity: Ensure that participation opportunities are accessible to all youth, regardless of background, and address barriers faced by marginalized groups.

Safe Spaces: Create environments where young people feel safe to express their views and participate in political processes.

Addressing Barriers:

Information Access: Improve access to information about political processes and opportunities for participation, helping young people stay informed and involved.

Combat Apathy: Address political apathy by making political processes more engaging and relevant to young people's lives.



Thank you for listening!



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