




# YOUTH DEMOCRACY HANDBOOK


The Youth Democracy Handbook discusses various forms of youth participation. These include local youth councils, national youth parliaments, advisory committees, advocacy groups, petitions and campaigns, model EU or UN programmes, as well as direct democratic instruments such as the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) as the first transnational direct democratic tool worldwide.


The improvements required for youth to realise the full potential of democracy in the areas of sustainability and inclusive societies include but are not limited to:




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 - Lowering the voting age and the age for signing citizens' initiatives, such as the ECI in all EU member states, but also at national and local level, as citizens increasingly use citizens' initiatives to promote sustainable and inclusive societies. Citizen-led initiatives also empower marginalised communities to put their solutions on the political agenda.


 - Financial compensation for the participation in Citizens' Panels and Assemblies to ensure that a lack of income does not hinder the participation of financially vulnerable groups. The same is true for caretakers and parents, for which childcare or virtual participation should be provided during the Citizen Panels.


 - Improved access to educational projects such as Model United Nations or Model European Union and work experience beyond urban capitals.


 - Workshops on "life skills", such as public speaking, included in school curricula as these are also relevant in a political context.


 - Strengthened networking between CSOs, private actors, and governments through government and EU impetus.

 - Promoting digital tools for democratic processes, such as digital voting in elections or referendums.

 - Legislative changes that empower young people and expand opportunities for participation in democratic processes. For example, binding elements and decisions by youth councils are key to keeping young people enthusiastic about democracy in the long term and using their expertise to benefit society as a whole.

 - A more binding follow-up to the ECI: In order for the ECI to remain a best practice, the organisers need appropriate follow-up by the European Commission after the successful collection of signatures. The lack of political follow-up gives the process only symbolic value.

 - Europe-wide referendums triggered by certain bottom-up citizens' initiatives would involve all EU citizens in deciding on Europe's future.

 - Stronger dissemination of best practices such as the ECI, Youth Councils, the EU Youth Dialogue, or the European Solidarity Corps. Any communication should use inclusive, gender-sensitive language and representations and rely on diverse communication channels among which influencers.

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**MEHR DEMOKRATIE** !



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