



ENoP Best Practices Compilation

Youth Participation

The Work of Political Foundations in the Area of Youth Participation

A Compilation of Best Practices by ENoP Members

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FOREWORD

Youth participation matters. It is a catalyst for societal progress, injecting fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and energy into the political and social spheres. By actively involving young people in decision-making processes, we embrace diversity, cultivate empathy, and ensure that policies and practices reflect the aspirations and needs of future generations. To effectively address low youth participation, we must navigate cultural sensitivities, respecting local customs, traditions, and values. By doing so, we can develop contextually relevant, inclusive, and sustainable strategies.

In today's world, characterised by rapid societal transformations and the aspirations of a new generation, youth engagement in politics and civil society is a powerful force for change. Although political and democratic actors still face obstacles when engaging with younger generations, the quest must continue. Youth participation is a matter of fairness and an essential driver of societal progress. Young people's voices, perspectives, and ideas possess immense transformative potential. Societies benefit from a rich tapestry of insights, diverse experiences, and forward-thinking approaches by actively involving youth in decision-making. Youth participation empowers individuals to become active agents of change by fostering a sense of belonging and ownership of their everyday lives.

Getting young people involved in politics requires a multifaceted approach that addresses their unique needs, aspirations, and concerns. Political parties must become inclusive spaces where young individuals feel welcome, respected, and valued. This involves actively listening to their perspectives, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and incorporating their ideas into policy-making processes. Additionally, providing accessible platforms for youth participation, such as youth networks, mentorship and capacity-building programs, and internships, helps cultivate their interest and understanding of political processes.

Empowering young people with knowledge about the importance of political participation and their civic rights and responsibilities is vital in encouraging their engagement. By investing in meaningful youth engagement strategies, we can harness young people's immense potential and energy, ensuring they become integral and influential actors in shaping our societies' political landscape and future. To effectively tackle the issue of low youth participation, it is crucial to understand and respect the cultural context within which young individuals navigate. This involves embracing local customs, traditions, and values, ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant, inclusive, and sustainable.

European political foundations have played a pivotal role in actively empowering young individuals, enabling their active participation and amplifying their voices in shaping the future. They equip them with the necessary skills and provide platforms for their voices to be heard. This publication is a comprehensive compilation of best practice examples showcasing a mosaic of European political foundations' extraordinary work and impactful contributions to fostering youth participation in politics and civil society. It highlights the profound dedication, visionary approach, and unwavering efforts of these foundations in their pursuit of creating inclusive and participatory societies across the globe.

The recommendations derived from this compilation are envisioned as a guide and inspiration for policymakers, activists, and practitioners seeking to nurture meaningful youth engagement. The text acknowledges the importance of empowering youth to shape their futures by fostering inclusive and participatory societies where their voices are heard, valued, and incorporated into decision-making processes.

By continuing their valuable work in empowering youth, fostering their participation, and amplifying their voices, these foundations pave the way for a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous future. We must continue exploring and unlocking the potential of young individuals and find more opportunities for creating an inclusive and empowering environment where young voices are valued, heard and given the platform they deserve to drive positive change.

Jasmina Mršo

Editor and ENoP Publications Coordinator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7

Introduction

19

Methodology

22

Case Study I

Capacity-building initiatives: access to knowledge

Jeunes de Valeurs 22

The Young Leaders Program 24

Konrad Adenauer School for Young Politicians (KASYP) 26

30

Case Study II

Youth networks and academies: building political influence

Program for Young Politicians in Africa—PYPA 30

The Academy for Political Management 35

39

Case Study III

Raising awareness: holistic approach to youth empowerment

Initiatives in Armenia, Czech Republic, and Romania 39

44

**Young Leader Profile I
Dr Raymond John Naguit**

47

**Young Leader Profile II
Sokhna Ba**

49

**Young Leader Profile III
Lucian Checheriță**

51

**Young Leader Profile IV
Chean Chung Lee**

53

Recommendations

56

Conclusions

59

References

61

About

INTRODUCTION

Background: Conceptual definitions and the importance of youth engagement

The European Union is founded on the principle of the participation of all its citizens, which is stated in Article 165.2 of the [Treaty of the European Union](#), which specifically focuses on youth: *‘Union action shall be aimed at encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.’* As an initial concept, **youth participation is based on human rights**, safeguarded internationally by:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The European Charter on Human Rights
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which safeguards the participation in society of children and minors under 18 years old. In particular, Article 12 of the UNCRC safeguards the right of children to have their opinions taken into account when decisions are made on matters that impact their lives.

Among the recognised and protected human rights which are directly related to youth participation¹ are:

- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Freedom of expression and information
- The right to freedom of assembly and association
- The right to free elections

1 Source: <https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/youth-participation/understanding-participation/policies-standards>

At the European level, the right of youth participation is reflected in a series of strategic frameworks, charters, and policies. It is operationalised across different programmes which either specifically focus on youth or encompass youth participation practices in various other policy topics. Currently, the main framework that offers direction and resources for youth participation is the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 and its respective EU Youth Goals. Similarly, as a result of the European Year of Youth (2022), the European Commission adopted the EU Youth Action Plan, mainstreaming youth participation in its external action policy.

Beyond the EU level, the Council of Europe has been pioneering youth work and youth participation for over thirty years. With its human rights-centred approach, the Council of Europe has one of the most advanced *youth participation in decision-making* models in the world, i.e. the co-management model.²

On the Civic Engagement of Youth

Youth engagement contributes to the fabric of a democratic society and is one of the pillars of a sustainable, stable, and long-term democracy. There is no society which implements or develops democracy as a political regime or which aims to have a fair redistribution of resources and common goods without considering the participation of its young generation. Healthy democracies foster civic engagement and, in particular, youth participation in decision-making.

While the *definition of youth* in terms of age brackets can vary across the European continent and certainly across the world, for the purpose of this publication, we will consider young people to be the population *aged between 15–29 years old*, as per the European Union’s measurement data.³

Definitions of civic engagement as collective action assume that such engagement most often comes in the form of collaboration or joint action to improve conditions in the civil sphere. While civic engagement is broader while still denoting a strong dedication to the civic sphere, it also differentiates between the political and non-political dimensions of participation.

Traditionally, in the political science academia, civic engagement in relation to politics or what can be considered political action has focused on participation

2 See Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/advisory-council-on-youth>

3 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth>

in electoral processes. However, civic engagement goes beyond exercising the electoral right as citizens. It refers to the set of norms (cultural and legislative), opportunities, and incentives for citizens to actively contribute to their communities beyond the bare minimum.

The most common typologies of civic engagement explain the phenomena by reference to five main dimensions:⁴

- Electoral participation and mobilisation for voting—the most commonly measured form of political and civic participation;
- Consumer participation—refers to actions from donating money to support a civic cause to using one’s role as a consumer to support certain brands whose business model is in line with one’s values;
- Party activity—to be a *member of, active within, do voluntary work for, or donate money to* a political party;
- Protest activity—taking part in protests, strikes and demonstrations to support a cause;
- Contact activity—actively getting in touch with organisations, political representatives or civil servants in power positions to make one’s voice heard or advance a cause.

All these actions qualify as civic engagement as they show the citizen’s interest in the public space. Young people tend to have, by nature, a more radical attitude regarding their demands from political leaders, and that has been historically true. This can be incompatible with long-term, often draining processes of negotiation in both political parties and public administration. The average young person not only does not have a direct interest in engaging with such a process, but he or she may not have *the skills, knowledge, and attitude* required to participate in hierarchical power settings. Addressing this challenge requires looking at the two sides of the same coin: on the one hand, participation skills have to be taught throughout school (a systemic approach), and political leaders, together with public institutions, have to meet young people halfway. Political leaders need to start communicating with young citizens in an accessible manner and address

4 Torell, J., Torcall, M., & Montero, J. M. (2007) Political participation: mapping the terrain, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281591279>

them as a separate audience. Currently, most political leaders and political parties rely on the youth organisations of their political party to send a message to young citizens, but that leads to an even deeper segregation in communication. Public institutions need to set in place formal processes for involving young people in decision-making. Over the past years, social media has enhanced youth civic engagement, as the online environment has become one of the spaces where young people spend most of their time. This has opened the space of participation and direct interaction of young citizens with political figures and public institutions, incentivising them to address young people distinctively, especially as youth are the population segment spending most of their time online. The online space offers the perception that results are faster (e.g., a political figure answering a tweet), helps mobilise people around the same cause, and even promotes perceived disruptive actions (e.g., signing online petitions, adding public pressure before a vote in parliament, or organising protests).

Youth engagement can be discussed in terms of the civic participation of youths (more commonly referred to simply as youth participation) and the political manifestation of their engagement (i.e. youth political participation). To shed light on the differences between civic participation in general and its political dimension in particular, consider that young people engage either individually or collectively (in organisations, groups, youth councils etc.), and their actions may take different (complementary) forms.

The table below⁵ pictures a comprehensive image of civic engagement:

Civic participation (latent political participation)		Manifest political participation	
Involvement (attention)	Civic engagement (action)	Formal political participation	Activism (extra-parliamentary participation)
			Legal

5 Ekman, J. & Amnå, E. (2012) Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology. *Human Affairs* 22, 283–300. <https://doi.org/10.2478/s13374-012-0024-1>

Individual forms				
Personal interest in politics and societal issues. Attentiveness to political issues	Activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues	Electoral participation and contact activities	Extra Parliamentary forms of participation: to make one's voice heard or to make a difference by individual means (e.g. signing petitions, political consumption)	Politically motivated unlawful acts on an individual basis
Collective forms				
A sense of belonging to a group or a collective with a distinct political profile or agenda. Lifestyle-related politics (e.g. identity, clothes, music, food, values)	Voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community, for charity, or to help others (outside one's own family and circle of friends)	Organised political participation: membership in conventional political parties, trade unions and organisations	Loosely organised forms or network-based political participation: new social movements, demonstrations, strikes, and protests	Illegal and violent activities and protests: demonstrations, riots, squatting buildings, damaging property, confrontations with the police or political opponents

On Youth Participation

As with any other concept, youth participation needs to be operational and explained in a manner that allows a variety of stakeholders to work with it in practical terms. Young people need to associate youth participation with experiences, spaces, and opportunities where their participation in society is meaningful. Academia needs to define and understand youth participation both from empirical observations and through research. Policymakers need to translate youth participation into legislation and programmes. Other societal actors (e.g. private companies, educational institutions, media etc.) need to recognise the importance of youth participation as an investment in the future of skills, knowledge, and the attitudes of citizens and society overall.

But what is youth participation? If there is one aspect that researchers, experts and academic voices agree on when it comes to defining it, that aspect is: *there is not one single, universally agreed definition of youth participation*. However, research on the topic has led us to a detailed understanding of youth participation as a process, the variety of forms and spaces where it takes place and the elements we need to consider.

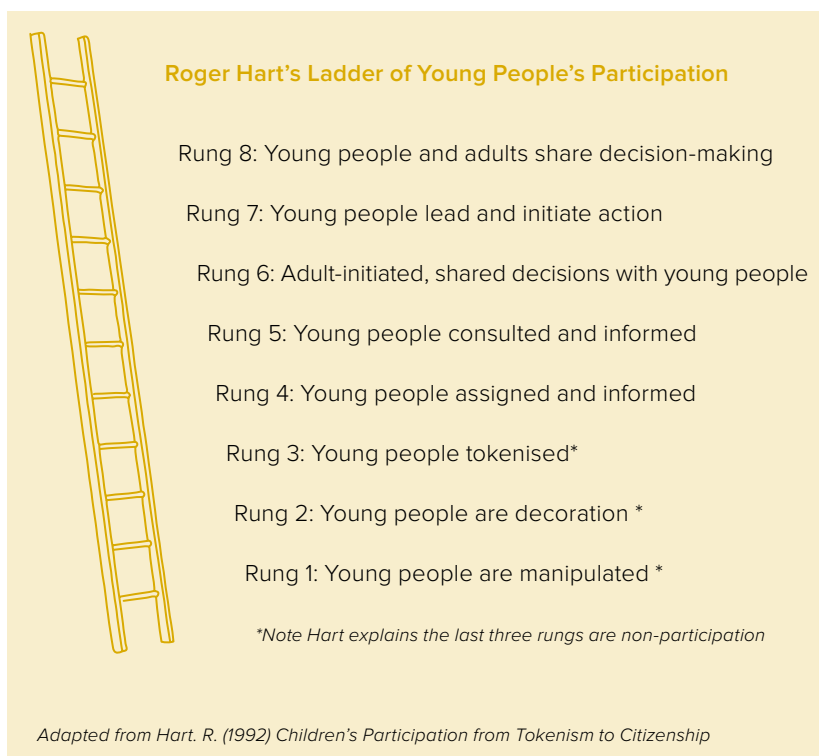
What is youth participation?

Youth participation can be defined as *the process through which young people influence public decisions with a direct impact on their lives*. Rather than being a one-off event or dependent on a specific structure, youth participation takes place when a complexity of mechanisms and factors are met.

The main elements that enhance a youth participation process are:

- Young people have to directly take part in it;
- It must avoid tokenism—young people have to be empowered to freely express their own opinions about the issues being discussed;
- It must give youth power—young people have to be offered real opportunities to influence decisions and have their say over the outcome.

The classical way to visualise youth participation and the most commonly used tool is Roger Hart's ladder of youth participation:



The ladder offers a model to explain youth participation in eight steps. The first three rungs of the ladder are non-participation situations which should always be avoided.

The following two rungs (no. 4 and 5) highlight the importance of information and critical thinking for youth participation to be genuine.

Rungs 6–8 are relevant to differentiate between adult-initiated processes and youth-led processes. These contexts are strongly connected to the concept of 'power' in youth participation: advancing from *adults giving power (thus being the power holders)* to *young people being empowered and participating or leading proactively*.

The ladder is a useful tool for adults involved in youth participation processes, such as youth workers, policymakers, facilitators, or political decision-makers. It is advisable to be used depending on the context since, for instance, starting a youth participation process with co-management (rung 8) is also not appropriate if other steps have not been undertaken.

Key elements to consider:⁶

- **Youth participation is about power**—especially participation in decision-making entails sharing power from adult-led institutions with youth-led organisations or young citizens;
- **Youth participation is a process**—it is not a one-off event, but rather it takes place at different levels, in various forms, and it aims at creating a culture of sustained engagement of young people with power-holding institutions;
- **It is connected to social inclusion**—it needs to be considered that young people are not a homogenous group, and so not everyone gets to participate equally in society and decision-making. In our efforts to understand Youth Participation, we need to look at who gets to participate and in what way.

The rise of social media platforms and young people spending most of their free time online has prompted a debate on innovation in youth participation. *Is the use of social media for expressing civic and political views by young people a new or innovative form of youth participation?* On the one hand, we can argue that social media opened new spaces for participation and gave young people new tools; it actively contributed to significant youth-led movements (e.g. Fridays for Future, the Arab Spring) and created a different way of communication and the framing of messages, in a form that young people are better at than adults. On the other hand, researchers argue that just because the environment and communication channels have changed (e.g. from radio stations to social media), it does not entirely mean that youth participation has gone through innovation. Fundamentally, the current generations manifest politically in the same ways young generations did decades ago (e.g. protests, strikes).

A closer look at innovation in youth participation has revealed that *for young people, collective action is important in forming strong and lasting political identities. If the traditional form is represented as voting, membership of a political party, or engagement with a formal political process or institution, an alternative form is simply anything other than this.*⁷

6 Farrow, A. (2018) Closer to the edge of participation and activism. Salto Youth Participation Think Tank.

7 Crowley, A., & Moxon, D. (2017) New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes.

Young people are often considered a hard-to-engage group of citizens or electorate, especially because they are not willing to engage with established, institutional, and adult-dominated processes and spaces. Therefore, political leaders and civil servants may try to understand how young people participate and what the innovative and alternative forms of participation are, so they can bring those methods to the level of institutions or political parties and be able to engage with youth. However, the most common mistakes are:

- *To consider youth as a homogenous group* and turn a blind eye to the issue of access to youth wings of political parties. In other words, it is important to critically ask if the young people who sign up and are active in party politics are representative of the entire youth population of the country.
- *To think that alternative forms of participation* (which youth are fond of) can be copy-pasted to an established setting. In fact, alternative forms of participation do not have an exact definition or example, but rather they are understood as any other form, space, and way in which young people express themselves politically, away from the established institutions and practices.

When reflecting on the change in the way young people participate and engage in society, the most interesting question is whether the emphasis of change should be on adults or young people: *is it the role of adults to change their approach and processes, or is it the responsibility of young people to learn how to engage with adults in their space?* Answering this question can lead to a different set of actions, policies, and programmes that aim to foster youth participation.

On Youth Political Participation

Liberal democracy is based on the notion of individual political rights and freedoms, but at the same time, on the idea of political representation through different collectives, most notably political parties. Parties represent different segments of society and articulate the interests of different groups. Since the political parties are ideological formations and not individuals affiliated based on age criteria, youth issues are reflected trans-sectorally in the big ideological picture of a political party and their stands on different topics of importance for young people: education, healthcare, employment, environmental protection, etc. *Civic participation refers to attempts to influence others—through any powerful actors, groups or business enterprises in society—and their decisions*

that concern societal issues. Civic participation can take place as part of a civil society organisation or informal action group, by volunteering, or simply as a citizen, being a fundamental civil right. Political participation clearly aims at influencing political actors and political decisions and takes place in political environments, such as a political organisation or a politically led public institution. Political participation can range from being an (active) member of a political party to running for public office or donating to a political organisation.

Young people are known for engaging less in conventional processes of political participation—such as voting in electoral elections—and choosing to express their political stances in more unconventional and individualistic ways, including what can be perceived as lifestyle politics. These aspects may create *a general misunderstanding among established political actors that young people are not interested in politics when in fact, they are not interested in the way politics is organised.*

However, relevant stakeholders who aim at increasing meaningful youth political participation should consider the following elements⁸ when designing policies or programmes:

- Information and communication—youth participate politically if and when they have access to knowledge and information that allows them to form political opinions. It often happens that youth are not considered a targeted electorate, and so political communication is not necessarily youth friendly.
- Authority and voice—in order for youth to participate politically, they need to be recognised as stakeholders and have their voice recognised as powerful. Making their voices heard depends on the political spaces they have access to.
- Power sharing—youth participation, in general, is about sharing power and empowering young people. In the political and democratic spheres, it counts even more that young people are given official power through different management and co-decision mechanisms, whether it is at the level of political parties or institutions.

8 Bárta, O., Boldt, G., & Lavizarri, A. (2021) Meaningful youth political participation In Europe: Concepts, patterns and policy implications - Research study. EU-CoE Youth Partnership

- Transparency and accountability—environments and clear legislative frameworks allow for fostering young people’s political participation, as well as building trust in the systems and institutions they aim to influence.
- Material and non-material support—youth political participation is also about having the right skills, attitudes, and knowledge to exercise their rights.

Paying special attention to youth political participation can be a good predictor of how democratic societies will look in the future, but more importantly, it helps to understand the present paradoxes of our societies. That is the case for the political participation behaviour of youth in Europe, but also across the world. On the one hand, we have evidence there is a constant disengagement of young people from traditional politics, such as voting, party membership, and an overall low level of interest in party politics. On the other hand, there is a more optimistic perspective which holds that young people are interested in political topics, but they engage using new and less conventional forms of participation.⁹

To fully understand the transition from conventional to unconventional political participation over generations, we need to consider that “*the agencies or structures through which citizens are mobilised and participate have (...) been transformed, with the spread of new social movements and advocacy networks.*”¹⁰ At the same time, individualised patterns of participation are growing as ties to political and civic organisations become weaker. This *distinction between institutionalised and non-institutionalised political participation* is particularly important for any kind of research on youth participation, given the fact that young adults are disproportionately more likely to participate through non-institutionalised means.

The above elements, coupled with the research findings that adolescence is a key moment in the forming of political thinking and civic behaviour, add to the importance of designing appropriate policies and programmes for youth engagement. This discussion helps us understand that essential factors with an impact on political participation—such as *resources, social capital, or political skills and knowledge*—can vary according to gender, race, sexual orientation and legal status and contribute to the reinforcement of multiple inequalities.

9 Weiss, J. (2020) What is youth political participation? Literature review on youth political participation and political attitudes. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2020.00001/full>

10 id.

These factors directly impact opportunities and challenges to participate across different dimensions: time, access to education, or leadership positions/mentors in powerful positions. Moreover, political socialisation and life experiences are strong predictors of a young person's capacity to get politically engaged. These factors also impact the so-called individual resources of a young person, such as self-esteem, motivation, and the drive to acquire new skills and fully participate in society in an informed and responsible manner.

The European Network of Political Foundations and its members play this key role: they contribute to young people regaining trust in institutionalised political participation and building strong political identities through collective actions (e.g. network academies, youth wing political parties support and spaces for influencing major legislation). It also contributes significantly to bridging the gap in the above-mentioned essential factors for youth engagement: resource allocation, access to social capital, building political skills, and facilitating access to leadership and mentorship in key moments of a young person's civic and political life.

On the case studies of ENoP members

Strategically placed at the intersection of civil society and political parties, political foundations stand out by virtue of their fundamental work in equipping young leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to develop a democratic society. The examples below showcase ENoP members' work in different regions of the world. While the foundations may have different ideological orientations, they all work to advance the same values and teach the fundamental concepts needed to foster political dialogue, which is crucial in a democracy.

On the Young Leaders' profiles

As living proof of the positive impact of programmes and initiatives carried by ENoP members, outstanding young leaders promote the civic and democratic spirit in their daily lives and career choices. By telling their stories for this publication, the young leaders show courage and strive to inspire other young people to step into their communities' political realm, carrying citizens' best interests at heart.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology and work of this study was guided by the following considerations:

- 1. There is a range of different definitions and understandings of youth political participation.** The body of literature in the field of youth participation analyses *different elements of participation*, and while we can find common elements, there is no unique and universally accepted definition of youth political participation. To ground the discussion to which this study aims to contribute, we considered issues such as the boundary between civic and political participation, the role of new and innovative forms of participation compared to traditional forms, the age of ‘youth,’ and social media vs traditional media.
- 2. Youth participation is intrinsically connected to social inclusion.** Any discussion on youth participation needs to consider not just how and to what extent young people are involved in political participation but who is engaged (which social groups of young people) and in what way.
- 3.** The ultimate goal of this work is to showcase examples of good practices from among the members of the European Network of Political Foundations while providing them (and other stakeholders) with a clear understanding of **how, when, and why political foundations should strive to play a stronger role in the ecosystems that support youth political participation.**

The methodology of this publication was based on two main elements: an initial desk review to understand the current debates on youth participation and interviews with ENoP members to identify and elaborate on good practices.

Desk review

The desk review phase included reading and summarising the main debates related to youth civic participation and youth political participation. The literature review comprised academic articles, studies, and policy frameworks related to youth political participation. The literature helped clarify the concepts, define typologies of youth participation, and understand the social phenomena from different angles, referring to spaces of participation, modalities (conventional vs unconventional), policy frameworks, and the roles of different stakeholders. The desk review included, without being exhaustive, the newest publications on youth political participation, such as (but not limited to):

- EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership
- Academic/research articles on youth political participation
- Existing policy frameworks (e.g. EU Youth Strategy, Council of Europe Charter on Democratic Youth Participation, EC – DG INTPA Youth Action Plan)
- Any other relevant publication issued by ENoP or its members

The review of this literature resulted in a clear conceptual framework that grounded the current and future work of ENoP members related to youth political participation. It helped to get perspective and clarify the key role that political foundations play in strengthening pluralistic democracies and reinforcing the social contract between young citizens and the state (represented by institutions and political parties).

Stakeholder interviews and review of good practices

During the stakeholder interviews, we sought to learn more about their good practices on youth political participation topic, especially finding out if:

- *The good practice model has innovative elements.*
- *The good practice model has achieved and recorded concrete results.*
- *The achieved results are relevant to the people in the target country/region/ organisations.*
- *The good practice model is sustainable and replicable to other regions/ countries/organisations and different levels of government.*

Interviews were carried out by Mrs Jasmina Mrsop from ENoP and Mrs Corina Pirvulescu as lead author. As a result of the interviews, some outstanding young leaders who benefitted from the programmes were invited to tell their stories in an effort to more accurately describe the impact of ENoP members' programmes. Their profiles are featured after the study cases chapter.

Lastly, the publication concludes with recommendations for the European Commission DG INTPA, member organisations of ENoP, and other relevant stakeholders who strive to better understand the role and impact of European political foundations in Europe and beyond.



CASE STUDY I

CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES: ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

Jeunes de Valeurs

by the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Côte d'Ivoire

FES Côte d'Ivoire specialises in political education with the aim of promoting democracy, social justice, peace and ecological sustainability. Youth activists are a particularly important group of beneficiaries of their training. FES runs this initiative in a climate where the political class is dominated by old men, who are not representative from either a gender or an age perspective. The political culture is hardly democratic, and this is noticeable across all political parties. If perpetuated, the next generation of politicians is unlikely to be more accountable and responsive.

A flagship project is Jeunes de Valeurs. Much of the civic and political education is short-term and concentrated in the main city of Abidjan, yet this project ran for 18 months and covered, in addition to Abidjan, nine peripheral regions (200 young people in total). The special character of this project is the combination of its modules. Civic education is combined with more tangible project management training, as well as an artistic module to promote the creative presentation of social issues. The project further gives young people the opportunity to gain experience and support their communities by organising small local development projects, providing for the exchange of knowledge during local meetings, supporting economic autonomy by providing training and seed funding for (mostly

Case Study I - Capacity-building initiatives: access to knowledge

cooperative) income-generating activities and amplifying youth activism by supporting public dialogue.

As part of the training, young people aged 19–35 years old are introduced to democratic values. The project has six core modules:

1. Civic education—fundamental concepts in multiparty representative democracy and instruments for civic participation.
2. Management and organising—building skills to manage resources and organise activities.
3. Income-generating and economic empowerment (an innovative element)—participants are introduced to elements of sustainability and building projects that are financially self-sustainable.
4. A community outreach programme and local dialogues—youths organise community dialogues, share their analysis, and gather citizens' insights to promote the articulation of grassroots opinions.
5. An artistic module (music, video making, theatre, poetry slam)—given the importance of culture in changing attitudes and communicating societal messages, participants are empowered to use art to foster dialogue on issues affecting the communities and bust myths around politics.
6. A strategy to implement a community programme—participants liaise with local residents to identify community needs and how to address them. The project provides the resources to implement the community programme. The module gives participants the opportunity to gain experience in carrying out local development initiatives and should create a lasting benefit for communities in the project areas.

In addition, the project organised three national conferences in different regions to foster dialogue among young people and decision-makers. These events assembled significantly more than those targeted (450 attendees). While many of the young people participating in the project are already involved in political or civil society initiatives, the conferences provided an opportunity to convey collective demands to senior regional and national authorities. The events offer a space for dialogue and for young people to express their strategic vision of the direction politics should take. Over the years, FES has noticed cross-overs from civil society to political parties, showing the young generations are willing to take political responsibility to foster change.

In terms of outreach, the project has an impressive reach of potentially 18 million contacts via radio, print media, and social media. Local journalists are involved in the community outreach projects of the participants, which makes the FES project a direct supporter of citizen-oriented journalism.

Takeaways from this project:

- Political empowerment is multi-dimensional, and the project exemplifies how different dimensions can be addressed.
- It is crucial to train multipliers and involve the local community—as the project requires complex expertise, the most sustainable method of operation is to train local experts to carry forward the initiatives and anchor the project thematically in local realities.
- A project should create a spin-off effect—the same project can be used to impact different audiences, i.e. journalists and local communities.

The Young Leaders Program **by the Eduardo Frei Foundation - Regional**

Youth participation is an integral part of the Eduardo Frei Foundation, as it aims to strengthen the voice and capacity of young people engaged in politics. It is an important part of the foundation's mission to support, promote and strengthen democracy and youth participation.

One of the flagship initiatives is **The Young Leaders** program. This is a training program for upcoming young politicians from Christian Democratic parties and members of the European People's Party. The aim is to educate the new young political elite of Europe by providing them with theoretical and practical knowledge on political, social, economic, and security issues as well as current developments in Europe. Participants are carefully selected and come with the recommendation of political parties from the European People's Party. Participants participate in three seminars over the course of a year and are also brought together in alumni events. This programme allows young politicians to build a network across Europe.

The Eduardo Frei Foundation carries out this project in partnership with the Robert Schuman Foundation.

So far, over the period 2011–2020, the programme's results encompass the following:

1. A total number of 172 people trained from about 27 political parties from countries such as Armenia, Georgia, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, and Kosovo.
2. Many participants have been able to take up leadership roles and positions within their parties, and participation in decision-making processes within their parties and other organisations has increased.
3. Participants who left their parties are still interested in political issues. Some continue to be active in CSOs or NGOs.
4. Participants have strengthened their political skills and their capacity to network.

The programme is repeated annually in at least three locations and brings together over 100 participants in each location.

Main insights and takeaways:

- It takes time to build a network of trainers and to build a relationship with political parties. A long-term perspective is needed in these kinds of programs.
- The challenges do not lie so much in the past as they do in the future. It took much longer for countries in Central and Eastern Europe to stabilise after the fall of the Iron Curtain than was hoped. Currently, democratic political institutions are under threat, and political opposition movements are facing intimidation and violent suppression.
- Current challenges identified by the former participants are the lack of ideological content in politics and the fact that citizens turn their backs on politics and cast their votes without reference to evidence or knowledge about ideological content and the impact of fake news and social media.

Konrad Adenauer School for Young Politicians (KASYP) **by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation**

As a foundation, KAS works to strengthen democracy around the world. The theory of change behind the KAS programme states that political parties should reflect society in their internal practices, thus focusing on strengthening intra-party democracy. KAS contributes to the broader democratisation of different societies around the world. To focus specifically on KAS's good practices in Asia, the foundation works with political parties in the region that share the same values of openness to dialogue. Overall, KAS's main approach is to foster a bottom-up democratic dialogue in society, allowing young political leaders and parties to shape a democratic model that best fits the cultural norms of the region.

The KASYP initiative has been in place for over 12 years, longevity and consistency being among the key factors in ensuring sustainable change.

The Konrad Adenauer School of Young Politicians is a capacity-development programme implemented by the Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KASPDA) since March 2010. The main goal of this two-year programme is to develop a cadre of young political leaders who will take the lead in the advancement of responsiveness and accountability of democratic political parties in Asia.¹¹ The programme lasts for two years for every cohort, during which time they attend four modules (three in Asian countries and one in Germany):

- 1. Knowing**—theory and concepts of the role of political parties in democratic societies.
- 2. Acting**—focusing on the role of political parties during electoral campaigning.
- 3. Serving**—focusing on local governance and development.
- 4. Connecting (in Germany)**—exchanging and learning with political parties in Europe and Germany.

The target group of this programme is young political leaders already active within the youth wing of a political party or a political organisation, most of them

11 Source: <https://www.kas.de/en/web/politikdialog-asien/konrad-adenauer-school-for-young-politicians-kasyp->

aged 25–35 years old. It is worth noting that young people in Asian countries are mainly defined as between 20–40 years old.

The KASYP initiative is, therefore, an offer to young political figures to strengthen their leadership capacities. The programme's objectives are:¹²

- To strengthen participants' democratic knowledge through a better understanding and appreciation of the role and functioning of political parties in democratic societies.
- To enhance participants' political skills through training and mastery in communication and presentation (pitching, framing, storytelling, debate, public speaking), election campaign strategy (campaign planning), governance and development (negotiation, systems and design thinking), and engagement and networking (diplomacy protocols)
- To nurture participants' democratic values and principles through the practice and embodiment of accountability, transparency, human rights, freedom of speech, justice, equality, diversity, the rule of law etc.
- To expand participants' networks through offline and online peer-to-peer exchange and dialogue with local and national leaders from Asia and Europe. 5. Contribute to the improvement of their respective political parties' internal capacity in terms of organisation, administration, outreach, membership strategy, party platform, election strategy, training and resource material development, and many more.

The innovative element of the programme, as compared with others presented in this publication, is the rigorous monitoring of the learning process of participants and the methodology to monitor and evaluate the impact of the programme.

Participants' learning process is monitored before (15%), during (30%), and after (15%) the training, while they also submit assignments and reflection essays and accomplish tasks in between modules of the training (up to 40% of monitoring and evaluation capacity).

12 <https://www.kas.de/documents/288143/23357090/2024-2025+KASYP+Programme+Information.pdf/5557176f-233b-e172-ec20-9696f7ba1f4e?version=1.0&t=1680512095199>

Case Study I - Capacity-building initiatives: access to knowledge

To be part of the programme, young leaders need to fulfil all eight eligibility criteria:

1. They must be citizens of an Asian country.
2. They must live and work in their home country at the time of the application.
3. They must be between the ages of 25–35 at the time of application.
4. They must be fluent in oral and written English.
5. They must have at least two years of substantial experience, particularly in work relevant to a political and/or party organisation.
6. They must have demonstrated a commitment to public service.
7. They must show leadership potential in politics, government, and/or civil society.
8. They must be committed to becoming active members of the KASYP community.

The programme has grown to cover over 260 young politicians from twelve Asian countries, and the indirect outreach is far greater, as most of the graduates are still involved in their parties or their country's politics. Some of them are elected officials. In addition, there is now an alumni association, the [Asian Democratic Leaders Alliance \(ADLA\)](#), with its own structure and profile.

In terms of scalability, the main takeaways of the programme:

- The main influence of the programme is in areas of learning interests, electoral campaigning, and political party environment.
- KASYP is mainly relevant and effective as a vehicle for gaining new knowledge and building strong networks.
- Its online presence and the character of its platform are crucial for sustaining this experience over time.
- Alumni are found to implement their learnings mostly by sharing with and training fellow party members,
- Capacity-building for young politicians in such highly diverse contexts also means that outcomes can only be generalised to some degree.

In conclusion, ENoP members' initiatives contribute to building a democratic culture of dialogue among parties, often in an ethnical or ideologically fragmented political context. The incontestable added value is that ENoP brings together political foundations from across the ideological spectrum, all promoting the same values of democratic engagement, respect for human rights, gender rights, and the importance of a political class that is representative of and responsive to the population. ENoP plays a crucial role in the sense that it equips young people to step into politics and make political parties more open to dialogue, respecting the same fundamental values and creating a strong basis for cooperation across the political spectrum.



CASE STUDY II

YOUTH NETWORKS AND ACADEMIES: BUILDING POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Program for Young Politicians in Africa—PYPA

**by the Christian Democratic International Centre (KIC) and partners -
Regional**

The programme is led by Sweden's KIC and implemented in partnership with three other Swedish political foundations from across the ideological spectrum (the Centre Party's International Foundation, Olof Palme's International Centre, and the Green Forum) and three local partners:

- l'Institut Général Tiémoko Marc Garango pour la Gouvernance et le Développement (IGD) based in Burkina Faso and implementing the programme in West Africa (Niger, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo, Senegal, and Ivory Coast).

- Education and Training Unit (ETU) based in South Africa—implementing the programme in Southern Africa (Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia).

- Centre for Youth Leadership in Africa (CYLA) in Zambia and implementing the programme in Zambia and Malawi.

KIC implements the programme in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania).

This leadership course and implementation design are particularly important to highlight as it is one of the few programmes that is led by foundations across the ideological spectrum, united by shared, fundamental values of democracy

Case Study II - Youth networks and academies: building political influence

such as respect for human rights, gender equality, the rule of law, etc. It is a multiparty international programme aiming to build the capacity of young politicians across 16 African countries to increase their influence in political parties and policy-making regardless of political affiliation.

The PYPA training is a month-long leadership course divided into 2–3 training sessions, and it teaches young leaders to:

- Better understand multiparty democratic systems
- Become effective democratic leaders
- Put youth issues on the national and regional agenda
- Develop clear strategies to achieve goals and implement plans
- Run successful election and advocacy campaigns
- Represent constituencies effectively
- Become effective political communicators
- Prevent and manage conflicts
- Network with other young politicians in their own countries and in their regions¹³

The programme started in 2012, and it shows a long-term commitment to young political leaders, which stands out in the African context. The programme is dedicated to young leaders up to 35 years old, as the African Union defines youth up to that age. Every cohort strives for gender balance, where 50% of participants are men and 50% are women. They are all selected via political parties and need to be endorsed by their respective political party.

PYPA's good practice elements are as follows:

- Recruiting participants through the political parties to make sure they are leaders endorsed by the party. The selection criteria in PYPA also include motivation, which is important as well.
- Ongoing and learning evaluation that helps constantly improve the programme

13 <https://pypaprogram.org/what-we-do/>

Case Study II - Youth networks and academies: building political influence

- Mixing different strategies such as capacity building, advocacy, and building networks. Apart from the leadership course, the programme includes activities targeting political parties as well as the PYPA alumni for the long-term sustainability of the results.
- Designing the sessions to increase the likelihood of interaction across party lines so as to foster political tolerance in class but also out-of-class measures such as sharing.
- Having participant-centred learning with interactive, participatory training sessions with group works, simulations, beehives, study visits etc.
- The programme is also participatory in the sense that participants indirectly manage the programme by constant loops of feedback and learning processes generated by the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

Main achievements of the PYPA programme:

In the programme evaluation report, in which alumni were interviewed, the following results were identified:

- At the party level, participation is about putting pressure on decision-makers and party leaders, mostly as a group of youth, training others, and working systematically to identify challenges and organise solutions in the party and in society, and to organise campaigns, advocacy and rallies.
- At the societal level, youth participate by improving service delivery, advocating for democratic and other basic rights, and reaching out to communities and other organisations/associations in society.
- Influence at the individual level manifests in alumni gearing action towards their parties (organisational) and/or society/national governmental level (societal level). Alumni report how relations with other party members and leaders have improved. They are given new responsibilities and visibility, and they vie for, change, and acquire new positions in the party or even in national government.

Case Study II - Youth networks and academies: building political influence

- At the organisational level, alumni influence party policies, structures and procedures. They contribute to strengthening internal democracy, advocating for quotas and elections instead of appointments, etc. Youth build new party structures, change youth leagues, and collaborate with other party members/leaders in policy adoption and implementation. Alumni also help prevent conflicts in parties.
- At the societal level, PYPAs influence democratic change by seeing that rights are won and contributing to policies, laws, rules, quota systems, etc., being adopted at the national level or in society. There are also examples of alumni who have contributed to preventing and managing conflicts in campaigns, national elections, or in society at large.

In terms of their work for democratic change, alumni within the political parties put pressure on party leaders and collaborate with other members as they work strategically to analyse needs for internal change. They also draft strategies, train other party members, change existing or create new organisational structures, policies, quota systems, etc. Examples of work for democracy with other organisations (or in society) can be found in how youth identify needs in society and work to ensure rights and service delivery in society. PYPAs work together with other youth in their communities for voter registration and communication about the importance of getting engaged in politics.

The work for gender equality done by the alumni is closely intertwined with activities undertaken to increase the influence and participation of youth, as well as with human rights initiatives. The mobilisation work for gender issues is particularly strong among alumni in West Africa and East Africa. Activities within parties involve policy-making, training programmes for (young) women, and campaigns for gender quotas in party structures. Outside of the parties, examples of activities such as collaboration with NGOs, regional/international women's organisations, advocacy for female quota in government, training (young) female leaders, micro-loans, etc., are undertaken with the objective of empowering women. *It is important to highlight that, during training, the sessions on human rights and gender issues are taught at the beginning of the training to ensure strong fundamentals for the coming discussions.*

Youths relate to human rights mainly as they work with the rights of youth and women. An earlier evaluation shows that *“youth and women” are the most discriminated groups in society, according to PYPAs participants and alumni.* As we have seen, much work is done by PYPAs youth to protect and strengthen the rights of

Case Study II - Youth networks and academies: building political influence

those two groups. There are good examples of activities, institutionalisation, and policies that also target the rights of the wider society, such as political rights (free speech/the right to vote), the right to education, health, security, electricity and water, employment, etc.

Methods used during training:

The program is a mix of traditional lectures and non-formal methods combined with debates, practical exercises, spaces for reflection, readings, and practical community projects. Given that the academies are implemented at a sub-regional level, and every session is hosted by a different country, the mobility of participants across borders has a positive impact on building relations, preventing conflicts, and causing participants to get inspiration from each other.

The range of topics is diverse: over 17 topics are covered, from sustainable development, gender, youth, and political ideologies to public speaking, leadership skills, conflict prevention, and campaigning. The combination of topics and methods helps create political tolerance across different parties.

Successful factors:

What makes PYPAs successful are the long-term commitment (the programme has been running for over ten years), the ongoing learning evaluation that pushes for continuous improvements to the programme, and the pooling of knowledge and experience from the partner organisations involved. Other important factors are the high degree of local ownership and the good relationship with the political parties.

The takeaways, if you want to scale this program in your community, are:

- Focus on topics that change attitudes rather than improve knowledge (e.g. gender and discrimination).
- Build on the existing needs and realities of the youth.
- Build on practical skills.
- Being able to facilitate youth in an empowering fashion is more important than being an expert in the topic facilitated.

- If the budget is rather small, focus on training youth who already have positions and preferably when they are new in their position so as to increase their ability to have an impact in that position.
- Be sensitive and culturally aware. It's important how some topics are introduced and how facilitators are prepared (written briefs and background information).
- Take risks—many of the participants trained will probably not get into influential party positions, but they will carry the spirit of the program and be changemakers in their communities.

The Academy for Political Management

by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Philippines

The Academy for Political Management has been running in the Philippines for ten years now, directly training 30 young leaders every year.

FES Philippines programs and interventions on political and socio-economic reforms, as well as the intersection of the programs, consider that youth participation is especially important given that young people comprise more than 60% of the Philippine population. Dedicated youth programmes that ensure the sustainability of advocacy and democratic reforms include:

- An Academy of Political Management for young leaders doing developmental and political work.
- A REBOOT Camp for young engineers who will be ambassadors of renewable energy and just transition.
- Young Labour Organisers Training for further strengthening of the labour movement.

The Academy of Political Management (APM) was conceptualised and premised on the conditions of CSOs and political movements in the Philippines, where their sustainability is challenged by the scarcity of skilled second liners and the 'fragmentation' of progressive movements. The shallow bench of skilled professionals in the second line of decision-making can be attributed to, among many other factors, the lack or absence of development or capacity-building

Case Study II - Youth networks and academies: building political influence

programs for its members. In order to advance reforms that form part of the necessary ingredients for democratic ideals, the organisations that espouse good governance, political and electoral reforms, and social protection, among others, must themselves be sustainable. There is a need to deepen the bench for and develop skilled second liners and use them to bridge the divide between progressive movements by creating a venue for structured capacity building, shared learning, and collaborations.

The Academy of Political Management (APM) aims to:

- Provide cadre formation for FES partners and progressive organisations.
- Build a network of cooperation among young progressives.
- Draw in new leaders to the progressive movement.
- Develop progressive future leaders in government, elective posts, businesses, CSOs, political parties, and social movements.

The curriculum aims to address both the skills and knowledge development of the second line of leaders. In the curriculum, personal skills will be developed first so that these skills can be used in the knowledge/content-based module. The curriculum covers various themes/topics, which are grouped into five (5) sessions consisting of three-day modules spread over a calendar year. The topics were chosen and developed in close coordination with partners to suit their organisations' needs and from the evaluations and recommendations of alumni of APM. The five sessions are:

Session 1: Personal Development Skills

Session 2: Political Communication Skills

Session 3: Political Theories

Session 4: Economic Literacy and Political Economy

Session 5: Project Management Tools and Skills

APM's good practice and innovation elements:

- Ensuring the diversity of participants—the APM team ensures that selected participants come from different regions and sectors; they also adhere to affirmative action in the sense that at least 40% of the participants and resource speakers are women.

Case Study II - Youth networks and academies: building political influence

- Self-care sessions—developmental and political work, as well as the dynamics of people in the organisations, can be too exhausting to young people. As burnout among young people is becoming common and is also a reason why they become politically disengaged, APM develops activities in Session 1 and Session 5 to help process and facilitate the need for self-care so as to be more effective and sustained at work.
- Special workshop and bar camp on gender and feminism—special sessions on these topics to ensure that gendered perspectives are incorporated into developmental work.
- APM Progressive Project—after all the sessions, the batch will implement a “progressive project” that they conceptualised throughout the APM sessions. FES initially funds the progressive project, where they will put into practice what they learned in the APM and ensure continued bonding and learning process of the participants even after the formal APM sessions.
- Inter-batch progressive project—FES provides a small grant for APM alumni, where they can propose a project that will be managed by a team of mixed APM alumni from different batches. This is to provide a space where APM alumni can work together and sustain the network.

Impact

With over 1 million indirect beneficiaries, i.e. other citizens impacted by the work of young political leaders trained by APM, the initiative is one of the most successful in the Philippines. FES Philippines measures the impact of APM based on, but not limited to, the following: (1) relevance and applicability of the APM sessions to the current work of APM participants and alumni; (2) continued networking and collaboration of APM alumni; (3) continued involvement of APM alumni in the political movement—whether in CSOs or in government; (4) APM alumni taking leadership positions in government, elective posts, businesses, civil society organisations, political parties and social movements; (5) an increasing number of applicants to the APM.

Takeaways from the good practice:

- It entails affirmative action—at least 40% of beneficiaries are women, and organisers are conscious of diversity and inclusion, especially regarding indigenous persons.
- Each of the applicants already engages in advocacy work; they are young, up-and-coming leaders aged 20–35 years old. The APM boosts their confidence and networking abilities.
- The program offers a safe space for them to network and exchange ideas.
- There is a strong network of alumni (over 200), and the APM ensures an inter-generational exchange of information and knowledge.



CASE STUDY III

RAISING AWARENESS: HOLISTIC APPROACH TO YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Initiatives in Armenia, Czech Republic, and Romania by the Friedrich Neumann Foundation for Freedom

The Friedrich Neumann Foundation for Freedom holds important programmes for youth engagement, youth political participation, and education for civil rights and the principles of liberalism. Below, we selected some examples from FNF offices in different countries.

Armenia

As part of the new overall strategy for 2023–2026, the FNF Armenia office has a goal of working with youth aged 16–24 years old.

In 2022, FNF Armenia organised specific projects focused on youth engagement:

- Human Rights School (three months of extensive training for law students)
- The Border of Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression (the publication of a manual on the topic and a policy paper addressing the issue, training for university students and members of parties, as well as one advocacy roundtable discussion with MPs, CSOs and others)

The Human Rights School is an opportunity to fill in the gap university education lacks. The project was proposed by a partner NGO—For Equal Rights (FER). The

idea of human rights schools was conceived during a situation analysis following the court hearings. The main cases of interest were related to gender issues. One year of monitoring showed that the main actors in court procedures, including the judges, attorneys, and lawyers, were harshly lacking in gender sensitivity, which in many cases put the plaintiff under double victimisation or pressure to justify their own deeds. Another reason behind the idea was that a look at the curriculums of the law schools in Armenia showed that none of them have human rights courses. This is just a chapter in the international law course and does not even cover the main human rights concepts.

The main achievement was the possibility to provide education to the future generation of law practitioners on human rights and also involve them in monitoring court hearings for different cases. Also, the school gave the participants the opportunity to visit the Constitutional Court of Armenia and meet Justice Vahe Grigoryan, Ombudsperson Kristinne Grigoryan, and Yeghishe Kirakosyan, Representative of the Republic of Armenia before the European Court of Human Rights. These types of meetings gave an opportunity to learn more about the Human Rights situation in Armenia from the professionals involved in their protection.

The Border of Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression project was proposed and implemented by the Institute of Liberal Politics (ILP). The need for such a project came from the situation of widespread hate speech disseminated on social media after the 2020 Karabakh War, as well as during and after Armenia's snap parliamentary elections in June 2021. The project tried to reveal and understand the gaps in legislation and advocate for change with a policy paper. Also, a manual was developed for the three training sessions conducted for students and members of political parties (mainly the Bright Armenia Party). As a result, 75 participants, young political leaders, were trained in techniques and attitudes for combating hate speech.

The project had a positive impact and proved to be scalable, as the Embassy of the Netherlands provided more funding for FNF Armenia to continue working on this topic. Moreover, the foundation will also receive grants from the National Democratic Institute to develop a reconciliation project with partners from Turkey.

Czech Republic

A flagship event of the organisation is the Eastern Europe Summit, already in its 3rd year and exclusively dedicated to young leaders. The summit offers a platform for networking but also a space for proposing feasible solutions to today's

challenges. The outcomes are encompassed in a [policy paper](#) which is further presented to the main political parties and discussed with decision-makers. In 2023, the summit focuses on geopolitical relations in the region, the Ukrainian situation, the role of Russian and Chinese influence, and the upcoming European Elections in 2024.

The upcoming Eastern Europe summit is expected to take place in September in Prague. It will be attended by over 80 young leaders, already engaged politically. In addition, the FNF office in the Czech Republic supports the economics olympiad in school to motivate youth to gain financial literacy and empower girls to get into economics.

Romania

The FNF office in Romania is actively involved in supporting both party political activity and civic engagement of young people. Regarding civic engagement, their most outstanding funded initiative is in the field of judicial education for young people (VedemJust), while in terms of political party support, they work with one of the youngest political formations in Romania (USR).

VedemJust – legal education for high school students

FNF Romania partnered with VedemJust to offer legal education and training for high school students in Romania. The project has two dimensions:

1. Legal education classes in high schools. These are taught by specialists, but many young volunteers have also been involved in the organisation of these classes.
2. An annual legal education camp for high school students. In these camps, besides the trainers, there are also many young volunteers who are graduates of previous editions of the camp.

During the annual event, young people learn about legislation with a direct impact on teenagers' lives, discrimination, and cyber criminality, and take part in workshops on democratic participation, etc. The target group is represented by teenagers aged 14–18 years old, and the camp brings together 30 participants every year, although they receive up to 160 applications yearly. They also come together with experts from different fields upholding the rule of law to learn directly from practitioners' insights from their professions. The main topics covered in legal education classes and camps are freedom, human rights, democracy, discrimination, bullying, legal liability, different types of crimes,

cybercrime, and human trafficking. Young people also learn how to protect themselves from bullying and what sanctions are applicable if crimes are committed.

As an innovative element, project leaders developed an app: Lege-n-Dar—a handy tool that explains legislation and legal concepts.

One of the main achievements of this initiative is to have introduced legal education as an option in school curricula. The foundation works with teachers across the country to equip young people with knowledge of the rule of law and the importance of knowing one's legal rights. Currently, over 1000 high schools offer legal education and use the handbook developed by VedemJust with the support of FNF Romania.

USR Youth

FNF prides itself on having played a pivotal role in establishing the youth wing of the newest centre-right political party in Romania, the Uniunea Salvati Romania (USR). USR Youth now strongly cooperates with the youth wing of PAS (the pro-European party of Maia Sandu in the Republic of Moldova) and other liberal youth political organisations in Europe, especially under LYMEC¹⁴ and IFLRY.¹⁵

One of the most recent achievements of USR Youth, which also boosts youth confidence for direct impact in politics, is the Women in Politics initiative, which established a quota for women in the political party leadership, thus taking a step forward for women's representation and empowerment. It aims to open a national conversation about women's representation in politics, as Romanian women politicians count for only 5% of local and government politics and 18% of the National Parliament. The Women in Politics initiative has already had 15 local events in 2022 and aims for more this year.

USR Youth also pushed for allocating 3% of the finances received from the state to be allocated to youth initiatives. There are grants and open calls within the party for projects addressing new themes in politics, such as burnout and the mental health of political leaders.

FNF Romania mainly provides know-how and human capital and also supports flagship initiatives such as the Future of Europe Youth Summit, which is already in

14 LYMEC - The European Liberal Youth

15 IFLRY - International Federation of Liberal Youth

Case Study III - Raising awareness: holistic approach to youth empowerment

its third year. The events bring together 40 Romanian and 30 international participants from other political parties from Europe who work together to advance policies and networking. FNF Romania funds the summit and has been offering strategic training to young people who run for public office. After successfully training 550 candidates, most of them young, on how to campaign online and giving them tips on storytelling, FNF Romania compiled the results in a handbook which was shared widely with all party branches.

YOUNG LEADER PROFILE I

DR RAYMOND JOHN NAGUIT



I am R. J. Naguit, and I am a medical doctor, public health professional, and political activist from the Philippines. I finished my nursing and medical degree from the University of Santo Tomas and am currently finishing my Master's Degree in Community Development from the University of the Philippines Diliman. I am currently the spokesperson of the Akbayan Citizens Action Party and a

public health consultant for a non-profit organisation that takes a more human approach to working with people whose lives involve drugs.

I started to become engaged in political work due to my frustration with student councils in university and the elected officials in the Philippines who espoused a very traditional kind of politics. In my early years as an advocate, I saw how their actions hardly contributed to advancing the rights of their constituents and empowering the communities they serve. I felt that there was so much more that could be done with the influential platforms that they were given. One of the first things I did as an advocate was to start a voter education program at our university which promoted meaningful participation of young people in the electoral process and increased avenues for candidates to share their platforms.

After the 2016 elections, I decided to work on something more specific to the youth sector and relevant to my profession. I choose to work in mental health

advocacy because of my first-hand experience of receiving a suicide note from someone very close to me during my high school years. As I continued my schooling, I encountered classmates and friends who suffered not only from mental illness but also from the stigma and discrimination that came with it. Some were denied treatment by their own parents, while some were barred from enrolling in school because of a diagnosed condition. After having conversations with fellow youth leaders, we thought that the most strategic way to improve access to treatment was by creating a national framework for mental health services. We worked with Sen. Risa Hontiveros (who eventually became my comrade in the Akbayan Citizens Action Party), who was our champion in the senate as the chairperson of the Committee on Health. We convened the Youth for Mental Health Coalition, a campaign network which carried out awareness-raising activities, direct lobbying to legislators, creative actions, and social media campaigns. After a year of lobbying, the two-decade-old bill finally passed into law in 2018. As we worked towards its full implementation, the organisation became formalised as a non-government organisation. We continued to engage with the national government agencies tasked to implement the law and also started to facilitate the provision of psychosocial activities. This led me to one of my biggest turning points as an activist. In one event, we had to facilitate a psychosocial session for minors whose parents were killed in Duterte's War on Drugs. That experience led me to realise the complexity of the harms caused by punitive policies and how they can potentially span across the next generations. This deepened my politicisation as an activist. Eventually, I joined Akbayan Youth, a democratic socialist youth formation in the Philippines and the youth wing of the Akbayan Party, and eventually got elected as its national chairperson in 2019. This led me to build stronger ties with advocates/groups advancing various issues, conduct solidarity work with marginalised sectors, and deepen my ideological stances. We've stood alongside labour unions protecting their jobs, farmers fighting for greater protection from the government, and resisted various attempts by our government to erode democracy. Of course, the space we were in did not come without any challenges, especially with an authoritarian president at the helm. Almost every day, we would experience social media trolling and be called terrorists by government officials and supporters. In one instance, I also had the experience of being detained by police for openly hanging a banner in front of the Commission on Human Rights.

Despite the harassment, our organisation persisted in continuing the fight for democracy and equality. With the belief that young people are the future of our

party, we decided to take a more proactive stance in our party congress. I was fielded by the youth sector as one of the candidates for the position of member of parliament. Eventually, I was elected by our party as one of its youngest nominees. While I had no prior electoral campaign experience as a candidate, I strived to learn as much as I could to represent young people in the best way possible.

With the world becoming more complex and the democratic space continuously narrowing, I believe hope really comes from us young people. Whether we take the lead in civil society, become part of the bureaucracy, or run for an elected position, we have the capacity to turn the gears. We are the generation who can make sense of our own situation and craft the most grounded interventions based on our own contexts. We have access to new tools that can build up on what the previous generations have started. We have the energy to translate theories into practice.

FES has really been a big part in shaping the kind of activist I am today. The FES Academy of Political Management gave me an overview of political ideologies and basic skills in advocacy work which I wouldn't have been introduced to as a medical student. Through the people it works with, I have met people who led me to my ideological home and political party, Akbayan. Through the networking events it regularly organises, I have come to meet, learn from, and exchange stories with activists in the Philippines and abroad.

Quote: Never give in to the idea that elected positions in government are only spaces for traditional politicians. We, young people, must stubbornly assert our space. We must not be afraid to challenge the status quo that does not work for us.

Twitter: [docrjnaguit](https://twitter.com/docrjnaguit)

Youth activists apprehended for hanging banners on Marcos Inauguration Day <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/06/30/2192069/youth-activists-apprehended-hanging-banners-marcos-in-auguration-day>

Democracy Talks in Manila: The Role of Youth Voices in Democracy: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/role-of-youth-voices-in-democracy.pdf>

Akbayan names health, women, LGBT rights activists as 2022 poll nominees: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/01/21/akbayan-names-health-women-lgbt-rights-activists-as-2022-poll-nominees>

Pass the Mental Health Bill http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/photo_release/2016/1006_01.asp

YOUNG LEADER PROFILE II

SOKHNA BA

My name is Sokhna Ba, and I am a 32-year-old Senegalese woman. I am an alumna of the Program for Young Politicians (PYPA) in West Africa. Since 2022, I have been the youngest MP in the National Assembly of Senegal. I am also a local councillor in the Mermoz-Sacre-Coeur neighbourhood in Dakar and the organiser of the young female members of my political party, PUR. I have university degrees in law, political science, international relations, and journalism-communication.



Politics has been a passion for me since I was very young. I am committed to contributing to the development of my country Senegal, which is struggling to rise to the rank of the great nations, hence my choice to study political science in order to be better equipped to do so.

I officially entered into politics in 2017 at the age of 26 by becoming a member of PUR, the Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement. In 2018, I participated in the PYPA training, which was very decisive for my political journey. Training modules like gender equality, political communication, electoral campaigns, personal leadership, good governance, public policy, and strategies against discrimination were particularly important.

Thanks to the great experience of PYPA, I now have more self-confidence. I am able to impose myself more on the Senegalese political scene and defend the

cause of women and young people who are always discriminated against even though they constitute the majority of the population. PYPA has been a great contribution to my political journey. After graduating from PYPA, my commitment and motivation have increased. I am now more involved, more informed, and more associated with the workings of my political party, my community, and my country.

Thanks to the PYPA training, I was able to make a good electoral campaign which was positively received by the Senegalese people. In the local elections of January 2022, I was chosen as a candidate by the coalition of the opposition in my neighbourhood in Dakar. We won, making me a local councillor. In the parliamentary elections of July 2022, I was again chosen as a national candidate by the coalition of the opposition. Having won, I became the youngest of the 165 MPs and had the privilege of being installed in the 14th legislature on September 12, 2022.

In the Senegalese context, with a predominantly young and female population, I have made a choice to focus on the issue of the political participation of youth in decision-making bodies in order to bring solutions to the problem of discrimination, as well as the issue of good governance and transparency in the management of our resources for the good management of public affairs.

I can see that the Senegalese parity law has a positive impact on women's empowerment. Out of a total of 165 MPs, there are 74 women, but there are still very few MPs under the age of 35. There is progress, however, at the internal level of political parties and local authorities. Here are links to my social network pages to follow my political activities:

Facebook: [Sokhna Ba](#)

Twitter: [Sokhna_BA](#)

Instagram: [Sokhna Ba Officiel](#)

YOUNG LEADER PROFILE III

LUCIAN CHECHERIȚĂ



My name is Lucian Checheriță, and I represent a great team of lawyers, judicial experts, teachers and teenagers, all volunteers, from a Romanian NGO called the Voice for Democracy and Justice Association. My background was to build my studies in the legal field and also in the business and marketing field. So, I have two university degrees from George Bacovia University (law degree) and Vasile Alecsandri

University (marketing and business communication degree), both of which are located in Bacău, Romania. I also finished my studies in business in Antwerp, Belgium, in 2022, thanks to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. I've studied international human rights and international criminal and humanitarian law.

Our association, VedemJust, was established about seven years ago, and my personal motivation was related to a big dream of mine: having a macro impact on a new generation and society. First of all, I want to help them to know their rights and responsibilities, as there are over 11,000 laws in Romania. I've seen that we have a lot of children and teenagers in our country, about 4,000, who are victims of abuse (rape, domestic violence, even murder) and also a lot of children and teenagers, about 3,700, who are juvenile delinquents. The second main reason for my big dream was to inform them and guide them to voting rights. We have a project initiative, Romania 2024, and regarding statistics, over 1.5 young

people will vote for the first time in Romania next year. For the first time in our democracy, we have all the elections in one year. Therefore, we ran a campaign to encourage youth to go out and vote, to go and be involved in civic society, and even to run for public office.

We had contact with over 500,000 children and teenagers in Romania and the Moldova Republic and taught them about their responsibilities and obligations based on law-related education. We also trained teachers on how to present some legal notions. In over 136 schools, we trained over 200 teachers and gave over 7,000 teenagers access once a week to law and civic-related education. We also give them our free manual, “*Student and Law*”, printed with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Every year, we have a legal academy summer camp, also sponsored by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, and over 150 students from Romania and Moldova have been through the programme. They learned how a democratic society works, about freedom of speech, freedom of religion, rules on the internet and social media, politics against drugs, and mock trials.

My political involvement consists of writing proposals for legislative initiatives and preparing the new generation to be engaged and involved. I like to say that participative democracy is the solution.

The motto that guides me and my message for other young people is “*Success is your duty, obligation and responsibility, and leadership means language: the power of what you are saying and what you’re not saying! So, be brave, authentic and with integrity with anyone, anywhere.*”

YOUNG LEADER PROFILE IV

CHEAN CHUNG LEE

I am currently a member of parliament for Petaling Jaya, Malaysia and a member of the Finance and Economy Parliamentary Select Committee. I am also the deputy president of South East Asia Parliamentarians Against Corruption (SEAPAC).

I hold a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore (NUS). Earlier, I graduated from the Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST) with an MSc in Transportation & Logistics and a Bachelor's Degree (Hons.) in Electronics Engineering (majoring in computer science) from Multimedia University.

I am interested in advancing developmental issues, as well as policies related to climate change, sustainability, science and technology. I also often speak about the regional peace process, for instance, the political turmoil in Myanmar and the upcoming election in Indonesia. At the local level, I advocate for public transportation, animal rights and youth empowerment.

I was engaged in politics when I was studying at university. Youths are filled with idealism and are willing to try new things; therefore, it is important to encourage youth participation in social or political processes.



KAS has been very helpful in broadening my views by introducing me to international best practices and different political systems and governance structures. More importantly, KAS also connected me with many like-minded young politicians around the globe so that we remain committed to our causes and support each other via long-term fellowship.

I would advise youths to start young in political participation because it will allow us to view this world with much broader perspectives and maturity. It also humbles our ambitions so that we really know where we are heading and who we want to become.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Network of Political Foundations “serves as an umbrella network and information hub on topics related to democracy and development cooperation. As such, it provides its members with a joint platform to engage in a coordinated dialogue with EU institutions, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders.”¹⁶ As shown above, its member organisations actively contribute to fundamentally developing the democratic fabric of our societies. During the interviews, ENoP members highlighted several aspects which can serve as recommendations for different stakeholders.

For European Union institutions, in particular, the European Commission and DG International Partnerships (DG INTPA), the following recommendations apply:

1. Align existing policy frameworks related to youth across different DGs of the European Commission. Example: the European Youth Action Plan in EU external action 2022–2027 is aligned from a communications perspective to the EU Youth Strategy by pinning the *Engage. Empower. Connect* dimensions. However, the programmatic implementation of the two policy frameworks differs greatly, as there is no equivalent of Erasmus+ to support youth active citizenship and engagement beyond the EU.

16 <https://www.enop.eu/>

2. When designing funding opportunities, the elements like inclusivity, team upskilling and staff welfare should be considered.
3. Provide opportunities for political foundations to partner with more local or regional level CSOs and not those with the usual big and well-known national NGOs and academic institutions.
4. Increase activities that foster intergenerational dialogue, mentorship, and sharing of lessons, especially as youth political participation beyond the European Union takes place in a climate where the political class is dominated by older persons and is highly unrepresentative.
5. Increase activities where networking and dialogue are the main focus, as these help to prevent conflict, foster a culture of democratic dialogue in contexts where politics is fragmented by ethnic identity and thus contribute to grasping, in practicum, democratic values.
6. Recognise the particular role filled by political foundations. They occupy a place on the ideological spectrum by proxy (in relation to the political parties they support), but are flexible enough to foster democratic dialogue, as they are not directly involved in party politics and electoral competitions.

For other civil society organisations and other stakeholders:

1. When aiming to promote civic and political engagement of young people, reach out to political foundations as well as political parties, as these are key players in fostering dialogue across the ideological spectrum.
2. Identify and support political foundations so they can play their role as bridges between civil society and political parties.
3. Work along with political foundations to provide civic and political education to young citizens, which is necessary for them to make informed ideological decisions and for voting.

4. Youth wings of political parties should be invited to work with political foundations to ensure training for all young members on fundamental concepts of democratic values, freedom of expression, gender issues, and other elements that constitute the basics of a democratic society.

For political foundations:

1. Foster youth participation by de-mystifying politics and making it accessible for ordinary young people.
2. Attempt to reach out beyond the youth wings of political parties and act as bridges between political ideologies and young citizens.
3. Set an example of promoting dialogue and democratic values and provide training on democratic concepts for young people, regardless of their ideological orientation.
4. Design youth participation opportunities considering the ultimate goal of influencing policy-making and politics, as well as encouraging political leaders to share power with young people and cultivate a political class that represents the interests of future generations.

CONCLUSIONS

The European Network of Political Foundations and its member organisations are strategically placed to foster democratic dialogue among different political ideologies, which constitutes the bedrock of a democratic society. Its member organisations, in particular, the political foundations, play a key role in bridging civil society and non-ideological organisations to political parties. In addition, they also play a significant role in ensuring that young politicians are equipped with the right set of democratic skills, knowledge and attitudes to appreciate a democratic society.

Youth engagement plays an equally crucial role in building a democratic culture in a society. When designing youth engagement opportunities, it is important to remember the following:

- Youth engagement—whether civic or political—is about power sharing.
- Youth engagement is a process and not a one-off event; thus, the continuity of programmes and keeping long-term goals in sight are very important.
- Youth engagement is intrinsically connected to inclusion—who gets to participate and at which level is also determined by other factors such as educational level, social background, gender, and social norms. Being aware of this element will help stakeholders to address the inclusion issues as part of a larger strategy of making democracy more sustainable.

Youth engagement remains one of the main challenges for different stakeholders:

Conclusions

- Political parties can reach and convince only the youth who are by definition interested in politics but have a challenge in reaching out to the most disengaged ones, who are usually also the most vulnerable young people. They are also the ones who need to be represented most accurately, as democracy is only as strong as the voices of its most vulnerable citizens.
- Most political leaders have a challenge in mobilising the young electorate, as young people are generally dissatisfied with the way politics is organised. Political leaders are not seeking to innovate in how they engage with young citizens, whether by addressing issues young people care about in their political agenda or by making an effort to communicate and be present in youth spaces.
- Public institutions—depending on which level of action and theme—usually have a challenge in gaining the trust of young people and engaging them in bureaucratic or legislative processes. This leads to young people not knowing how to engage and at which level they can influence decisions.
- Youth workers strive to remain politically neutral, although the skills and attitudes that youth workers develop through the services they provide equip young people with the confidence to participate in the political life of their communities.
- Youth organisations have limited resources to engage young people, but they are often the actors who understand better how to communicate and build trust between youth and institutionalised processes.

By strategically integrating youth engagement into their daily work and long-term plans, political foundations contribute to building the very fabric of a democratic society. Having a non-electoral agenda, they can set the example of continuous, ideological dialogue, so necessary in our societies which are at increased risk of polarisation.

For political parties:

- Gain better knowledge on how young people participate and build on their interest in public issues, explaining how political parties can be a vector of change.
- Build an authentic intra-party interest in attracting young people to politics and meet the young people where they are without expecting them to just join a political party.

- Map and identify the young electorate as a valid electorate, even if youth do not show up in high numbers to the polls (in the short term). In practice, this means training the senior leadership of the party to engage with young people, knowing what issues young people care about and genuinely putting them high on the political agenda and integrating youth in the party's political communication strategy as a distinctive target group.
- Make sure young people are in power positions in the political party, and not only in the youth organisation of the party.
- When in doubt about what young people want, ask them, and go out of your comfort zone (*the youth political organisation*) to reach out to under-represented youth.

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Christian Democratic International Centre - KIC Sweden: <https://kicsweden.org/en/>

Eduardo Frei Foundation: <https://www.cda.nl/eduardo-frei-foundation>

Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung: <https://www.fes.de/>

Friedrich Naumann Foundation: <https://www.freiheit.org/>

ABOUT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT ENoP

The European Network of Political Foundations - ENoP serves as an umbrella network and information hub for political foundations on topics related to democracy and development cooperation. ENoP brings together 46 political foundations from 19 European countries, active in Europe and with over 130 local offices in partner countries. Although independent in nature, ENoP is a cross-party network, and its broad spectrum of affiliation corresponds to the political representation in the European Parliament. As such, the Network reflects the political diversity of the European democratic landscape and gives ENoP a unique approach.

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This publication is a comprehensive compilation of best practice examples showcasing a mosaic of European political foundations' extraordinary work and impactful contributions to fostering youth participation in politics and civil society. The compilation seeks to inspire, inform, and guide policymakers, activists, and practitioners worldwide to nurture meaningful youth engagement by documenting successful initiatives, innovative methodologies, and lessons learned. It acknowledges the importance of empowering youth to shape their futures by fostering inclusive and participatory societies where their voices are heard, valued, and incorporated into decision-making processes.



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