



#YouEU Booklet

e-participation in the EU democratic life

Good Practices Resources across Europe



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Project Overview

The **purpose** of the #YouEU project is to reinvigorate the relationship of European Youth with the EU and promote active youth participation in the EU democratic life by harnessing the potential of digital tools and promoting e-participation.

A well-informed young generation confidently engaging with digital democracy tools and making its claims open to the public sphere will foster active EU citizenship and will build a sense of European identity.

The **objectives** of the project are:

1. Enhance the capacity of Youth Workers and CSOS Professionals to support young people on using digital democracy tools so as to better understand and contribute to EU democracy processes
2. Raise awareness and educate youth on e-democracy and participation concepts, tools and their potential
3. Strengthen transnational cooperation among youth and foster an EU digital public sphere
4. Encourage youth participation in the Conference on the Future of Europe
5. Foster understanding and a sense of a common European identity among youth

What is Good Practice

- Initiatives with the aim to raise participation - including **digital tools/apps**, **Social Media** or simply activities that use the **web** in general.
- Initiatives primarily **focussing on youth**, but also open to initiatives targeting other groups.

Quality Indicators

Five **Quality Indicators (QI)** with short definitions help to identifying if an initiative, project etc. meets the expectations of a Good Practise example.

1. Innovation
2. Effectiveness (success)
3. Impact
4. Participation level
5. Deliberation level

QI include **key democratic concepts** and **processes** (deliberation, participation). Whereas a main emphasis is put on the **usability aspect**.

We also include the **innovative aspect** of the initiatives, their **effectiveness** and the **impact** they have.

Furthermore, it is their ability to stand as a **model** that is important.

However, not all research questions and not all aspects will be applicable to each initiative.

1 Innovation

Innovation can refer to a **new idea or method**, but also to social aspects. Both **social** and **technical** issues are therefore taken into account.

We ask initiatives whether they **provide something new, create something that hasn't been there before**, use **new methods or approaches** and have the potential to **provoke a long-lasting change**.



2 Effectiveness

We analyse the **effectiveness** of initiatives, through their ability to be successful and produce the intended **results**.

Initiatives are evaluated by taking into account, the total number of participants, social media followers, answers (e.g. in questionnaires), sessions/discussions organised or the number of interactions with politicians.

3 Impact

In our case, impact refers to the **level of influence** that an **initiative** can **generate** in a **certain area** or among a **certain group of people/society** - and possible positive effects to political participation. However, this Quality Indicator is closely connected with effectiveness as effective initiatives might also have a higher impact.

4 Participation level

Does the initiative raise participation in general? And does it consider the basic aims of **Participatory Democracy**, by **fostering and raising participation** and transforming citizens to **active participants** with the ability to **consider political decisions** from a general perspective. Meaning, citizens should be **actively involved** towards the various political systems.

5 Deliberation level

Deliberative democracy claims that political decisions should be the product of **fair** and **reasonable discussions** among citizens. All citizens exchange arguments and consider different claims. They all have the **same level of power and information** in order to be able to decide based on general rules regarding discussions.

European HomeParliaments

Europe



NATIONAL	LOCAL
REGIONAL	EUROPEAN
Target Group	European Citizens
homeparliaments.eu	

'HomeParliaments' is an initiative by Pulse of Europe, organising private discussion sessions in essentially any EU country. During these 4 to 8 people discuss current EU topics. Each session is moderated and lasts approximately 2 hours. At the end of each session, the group decides whether to agree or disagree with the topic. All results are then collected and forwarded to European politicians such as members of the European Parliament and the Commission.

The HomeParliaments facilitate people's individual approach to important issues of EU politics in a private setting and connects them directly to EU politicians. Thereby minimising the gap between elector and decision maker. Furthermore, the initiative interconnects people from different member states, facilitating a discussion on a more integrated European level. The initiative has a potential of creating political maps showing different attitudes around the EU.

However, there has not been much tangible proof of a direct impact on EU decision making. This is not only the initiative's fault, but also shows the need for further improvement within the EU's participatory development.



1. Innovation

The HomeParliaments main innovative strength is its European dimension, being adaptable in any EU member state. Another aspect is the focus on the private sphere. The majority of sessions are organised by 'ordinary citizens'. There are very limited hierarchical elements, allowing all participants equal participation.

2. Effectiveness

So far, there have been four rounds of HomeParliaments. Each had a duration of about 3 to 4 months. The results of the 3rd round, from autumn 2020 had more than 1200 participants from more than 12 EU countries. MEPs have also participated in additional public debates and also commented on results they received.

3. Impact

The initiative raises innovative attitude towards the EU. It facilitates constructive engagement as well as the opportunity to further identify with EU institutions. Therefore, helping individuals develop a sense for the European dimension of current political issues. Unfortunately, there is no data showing how HomeParliaments have had an impact on political decision processes.

4. Participation level

The European HomeParliaments aspire to generate discussions about crucial EU policy topics. They get citizens to discuss various topics, but also connect them – especially by having participants from multiple countries. The format therefore helps raising awareness among participants that all European citizens are part of the political processes.

5. Deliberation level

The concept of HomeParliaments eliminates most hierarchical structures regarding the level of power and information. There is no division between experts and audience, everyone's points and contributions have the same relevance. All participants receive the same information and same questions.

WeFor

Greece



NATIONAL	LOCAL
REGIONAL	EUROPEAN
Target Group	Youth / Students
Social Media, Podcasts, wefor.gr	

WeFor is a student led organisation, aiming to redefine social and political conversations in Greece. Their vision is to cultivate active participation in democratic processes and increase the level of deliberation among citizens, especially youth. The initiative is designed to reach a wide audience by using conventional and newer forms of media – facilitating the development of e-democracy.

WeFor first campaigned in 2020 focusing on gender equality, for which they adopted the name “WeForWomen”. The initiative rebrands their name according to their current campaign. Using this innovative approach, they play on attracting more followers to join the conversation. By developing ongoing discussion, the initiative aims to gradually raise issues from individual discussions to a broader national level – suggesting policy ideas and targeting institutional change.

Going forward, the initiative will face the need to develop direct links between their audience and politicians as well as further improve the evaluation of their content.



1. Innovation

The initiative aims to adapt to new methods of content sharing and thus develops and reinvents itself with each new campaign. It recognises the power of social media in shaping attitudes

2. Effectiveness

WeFor has exceeded 20,000 views on their live events so far and looks at a steady followership of more than 7,000 on social media. They have attracted prominent professionals as well as broad political and municipal support for their campaign. WeFor has proven that they are well-equipped to keep their audience engaged with a campaign by providing targeted content and events.

3. Impact

The initiative also showcases how policy-making can be conducted and highlights the importance of public involvement. Though hard data is still to be expected, youth-engagement seems to be developing steadily. WeFor has so far effectively used social media, newsletters and podcasts in their campaigns.

4. Participation level

WeFor aims to inform and then increase the awareness on pressing issues, because it believes, informed citizens become responsible participants in the democratic processes. Furthermore, they also encourage followers to directly engage with projects, raise issues and discuss potential involvement.

5. Deliberation level

Participants are continuously confronted with an array of different perspectives. Discussions, events, and podcasts are open to anyone wishing to participate. The events are primarily deliberative and focus on the engagement with different opinions and policy perspectives. The campaigns don't focus on consensualising towards solutions but rather focus on generating inclusive attitudes within their heterogeneous audience.

Café Babel

Europe



NATIONAL	LOCAL
REGIONAL	EUROPEAN
Target Group	Youth
Platform cafebabel.com	

Café Babel is the first multilingual participatory magazine in Europe. Their stories try to present Europe differently than it is represented in media and depict what Europe is in real life from a young citizen’s point of view.

This online magazine is a single platform in which a network of volunteer authors, translators, filmmakers and photographers work together to report on the daily lives of young Europeans.

It is an initiative that contributes to democratic processes. It mostly contributes to social topics and facilitates access to information.

As a platform Café Babel has also been effective in promoting other initiatives such as the TransEuropa Caravans. Furthermore, it has also won the Altiero Spinelli 2018 Prize for Outreach, by creating a miniseries about migration, exhibitions, contests in which everyone can participate.



1. Innovation

Café Babel raises e-participation by using professionals from communication, design and translation to create targeted and specific content on democracy and society in Europe and around the World. Furthermore, it acts as an interactive platform, linking the audience across Europe. Thus creating an Inter-European media space as a common communication platform that involves all European countries.

2. Effectiveness

Café Babel has about 250,000 visitors a month, 2.5 million page views, more than 50,000 published stories, 15,000 contributors and a team of professional editors and journalists in Paris, Brussels, Rome and Berlin. The initiative successfully targets youth through collaborative tools in content production and therefore enables a deeper involvement of its audience.

3. Impact

The initiative allows users to get informed but also strengthen their own skills and competences. Participants get learn to be part of a democratic process – both by being informed and understanding political issues, as well as learning to participate in the debate by informing others of aspects relevant to them.

4. Participation level

Café Babel addresses issues resonating to its young audience and creates a platform for them to also feed into. Participants have the opportunity to take on responsibilities as knowledge-creators but also as awareness campaigners.

5. Deliberation level

A main aspect of Café Babel is its focus on participatory journalism – facilitating engagement and communication among young citizens. Participants are thus able to create and process information in different roles – researchers, editors, section managers etc. The initiatives own editors however, do monitor and select the contributions.

MojGrad

Skopje, North Macedonia



NATIONAL	LOCAL
REGIONAL	EUROPEAN
Target Group	Residents of Skopje
Social Media mojgrad.mk	

MojGrad is a platform facilitating civic participation in decision-making processes in the City Council of Skopje. The platform is a virtual infrastructure for building an authentic local community, promoting direct democracy at the local level.

The initiative is described as a tool for democratisation. It aims to contribute to ongoing problem solving, continuous control and supervision of the local government by the residents and increasing the transparency of the work of the City of Skopje. In the long run, the goal is to enhance direct democratic involvement through institutional transformation, which will gradually lead to handing over the city management to the community. The platform allows residents to directly influence the political agenda of the local government and address local issues.

Young people’s engagement on this platform can be fostered by an increased promotion on social media channels. Moreover, this initiative can benefit from in-depth assessment on the reasons for the rejection of the past proposals by the City of Skopje, and thus inform the development of future proposals.



1. Innovation

The MojGrad creates a platform for users to raise issues on local levels and propose solutions. Participants have the opportunity to comment, discuss and vote on solutions. MojGrad thus also acts as a platform for “public petitions”. The initiative also involves members of the city council, creating a direct link between members of the public and the legislative body.

2. Effectiveness

By mid-June 2021 the residents of the City of Skopje had submitted a total of 37 proposals through the MojGrad platform, addressing a range of issues, including infrastructure, environment and culture. The number of votes for each proposal differs, ranging from 100 to over 1000. The users are predominantly young people. The top most voted proposals are submitted before the respective city councils.

3. Impact

Though none of the seven proposals submitted to the City Council of Skopje have been accepted the initiative has been successful in raising participation. It has established itself as a channel of information on key local issues. Furthermore, the platform has also been used to initiate a proposal addressing the City Council of Bitola, which is still under review.

4. Participation level

The MojGrad website enables anyone to actively engage in ongoing discussions and proposals, as well as to create new proposals. All discussions and information are publicly accessible. Thus raising digital civic participation and enhancing democratic sensitivity within the local community.

5. Deliberation level

As mentioned, discussions are at the centre of the MojGrad platform, concerning important local issues. Their core methods concerning deliberation has to do with exposing participants to different views on the same issue. Online discussions and other events are open to those wishing to participate.

Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform

Western Balkans



NATIONAL	LOCAL
REGIONAL	EUROPEAN
Target Group	Youth
Social Media, Platform	

WBYCP stands for Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform and is a grassroots regional youth platform. It was created by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), together with the umbrella youth organisations of the six Western Balkans Countries in 2017

Throughout the five years of operation, WBYCP has created the first bottom-up youth cooperation structure, provided a platform of communication and coordination and empowered Western Balkan youth with the aim of reaching out and involving them in the regional policy making process.

WBYCP is designed to function as a resource centre for youth in the Western Balkans. It offers a wide array of existing initiatives, national, regional and EU-supported that target youth and cover the Western Balkans.

Going forward, the initiative will face the challenges of reaching a greater visibility and providing a more direct evaluation format of their tools, content and operating model.



1. Innovation

WBYCP links together youth organisations, movements, informal groups and young researchers, who can register their profile and promote their activities. Participants can find contact information of partner institutions in other countries and ongoing projects. Furthermore, users can promote their own campaigns and find fitting partners.

2. Effectiveness

WBYCP connects more than 300 partners in the Western Balkans region. Their engagement on social media counts more than 3,500 followers.

3. Impact

By monitoring and engaging with policies campaigns in the Western Balkans, WBYCP ensures a youth lead influence in ongoing issues. The initiative also focuses on EU development agenda projects for the region and facilitates a spectrum of capacity building opportunities for youth organisations.

4. Participation level

WBYCP promotes a bottom-up regional cooperation model, actively contributing to fostering collaboration between youth organisations in the Western Balkan, and their communication with political decision-makers on a national, regional and EU level.

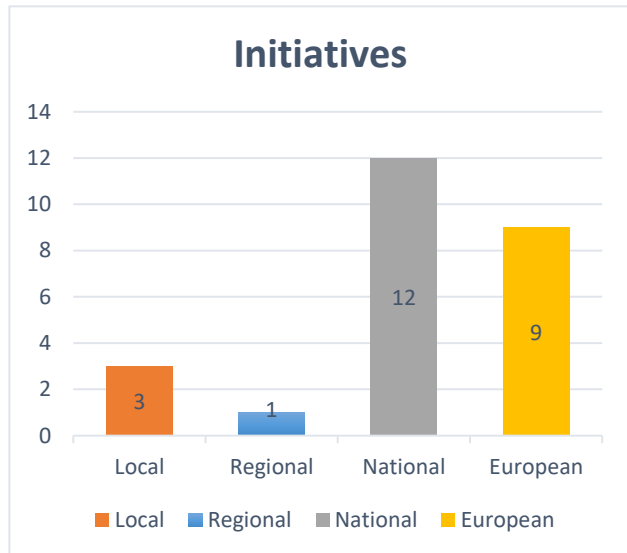
5. Deliberation level

The deliberation level within the WBYCP-structure is high, as they bring together youth organisations all across six Western Balkan countries – N. Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over 100 youth organisations partake in this initiative, all bringing their own perspectives and practicing models.

Conclusion

Even though e-participation is not a new phenomenon, the research clearly shows that in almost all countries in question (Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Northern Macedonia, Spain), **only a few initiatives out of 25 have the potential to reach a considerable number of people.**

To identify the distribution level, we have classified each initiative as active on local, regional, national or European levels. Of 25 initiatives, most are engaged on a national level (12), followed by nine initiatives operational on a European level. Only three are active on a local level and one on a regional level



Initiatives active on the local level (two in Austria and one in Northern Macedonia) **focus on facilitating a constructive participation** to improve the city, quarter or village and to report malfunction and help local authorities to manage the city in a better way.

21 out of 25 initiatives on the national and European level focus on topics motivating (young) people to take a more active role in society (**Active Citizenship**). Many of them try innovative approaches to inform their audience about the EU's possibilities. The range of activities reaches from informal conversations about EU topics (Café con Europa, Spain) and innovative discussion platforms (European Home Parliaments) to initiatives based on projects, for example, from youth organisations (for example, the National Youth Council of Macedonia or the Hellenic National Youth Council).

Although many of them try to use innovative ways to tackle the topics of Participatory and Deliberative Democracy, the success of initiatives in terms of



putting ideas, concepts into concrete results through the involvement of political decision processes is limited.

In all countries and on the European level, there is still a lack of a structured form of (e-) participation, as tools and elements of Participatory/Deliberative democracy concepts are still not a part of the political decision-making process.

This research indicates a yet long path to reaching active youth participation in the EU democratic life. The next generations have much to contribute to their societies, and can shape healthier democracies. More specifically, the **active participation** of (young) citizens **in democratic structures** will **foster the legitimacy, credibility, and operation of democratic systems** and bring global change and innovation.

The latter demonstrates **the importance** to have the ability **of using digital tools** and be engaged **in e-participation**. Meaningful democracies need youth participation. To this end, this booklet primarily objective is to support young people and youth organisations in identifying initiatives according to their needs and bring them closer to the EU democratic life.

Partners



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