

VOTE OUTSIDE THE BOX

YOUNG VOTERS: DEMOCRACY REBOOTED

Online Public Talk

Background

In recent decades, youth voter turnout has been at historic lows within many democracies. This has caused some to argue that young people are disinterested in politics – however, recent research has shown this is not necessarily true¹. Instead, young people are very politically motivated, but have low levels of trust and belief in formal representative democratic institutions, often preferring to express their political convictions through alternative forms of participation such as volunteering and activism.

Nevertheless, the engagement of all citizens in electoral democracy is still central to the health of our democracies, and so promoting young people's electoral participation is a key task of any democratic society. It is sometimes argued that the first election leaves a footprint on the voters behaviour, influencing their habits in future elections². Therefore, someone who starts as a voter in early years is more likely to stay a voter throughout their lives.

In this context, the 'Vote Outside The Box' toolkit has been commissioned by the Council of Europe's Division of Elections and Civil Society (DG Democracy) to support election management bodies and other national stakeholders in the Council of Europe member States in their efforts to develop strategic approaches and to raise awareness about electoral processes amongst young people, particularly, as potential first-time voters.

The toolkit directly builds on the Council of Europe's URSO paradigm and toolkit for strategic planning and prioritisation of electoral cooperation. It is particularly intended for organisations who have identified awareness raising measures amongst youth as a strategic priority, and wish to identify effective locally relevant approaches to awareness raising activities.

Objectives

The purpose of the online talk is to host a discussion on current challenges and possible strategic solutions to engaging young people into electoral processes, whereas to introduce to participants to the 'Vote Outside The Box' Toolkit as one of the possible instruments to be used therefore. Information will be provided on the various ways in which a strategic approach to awareness raising with young people can be developed using the tools provided by the Toolkit.

¹ LSE (2013) EACEA 2010/03: [Youth Participation in Democratic Life, London](#), LSE Enterprise

² Aldrich J. H. et al. (2011) "Turnout as a habit", *Political Behaviour* 33(4), pp. 535–63

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-010-9148-3>

The online talk is designed to encourage an interactive participation and to facilitate information sharing among participants, discussing relevant experiences, good practices, challenges and opportunities.

Expected Outcomes

- Discuss what is known about the range of attitudes and views young people can hold to representative democracy, elections and political institutions, and how a better understanding of this can inform a strategic approach to electoral awareness raising campaigns.
- Discuss the possible types of awareness raising measures that can be used to connect young people to the electoral process such as formal education, non-formal education and communications strategies.
- Identify how electoral management bodies and other stakeholders can take a strategic approach to awareness raising measures.

Duration and format:

The event will be held in the format of Webinar using Bluejeans Events platform

The event will last approximately 2 h (30' presentation of the CoE toolkit + 60' discussion + 30' welcome and closing remarks)

Two rounds of panel discussion is planned during the event. Each round will last approximately 30 minutes. Every speaker will have approximately 5 minutes per one round.

Round one topics for discussion:

- Why are young people often less likely to vote than older generations?
- Research³ indicates young people often feel public institutions and politics are not relevant to them - what are the causes for this?
- How the gap between political institutions and young people can be effectively and mutually addressed?

Round two topics for discussion:

- How can our democracies connect to young people and bring young people to the voting booth?
- What work is your organisation involved in that enables this?
- What can electoral bodies do to raise electoral awareness amongst young people?

Speakers:

- **Claudia Luciani**, Director, Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe
- **Antje Rothemund**, Head of Youth Department, Council of Europe
- **Dan Moxon**, Council of Europe expert, "People, Dialogue and Change"
- **Corina Pirvulescu**, Council of Europe expert, "People, Dialogue and Change"
- **David Clark**, Head of Education and Engagement of the House of Commons, UK
- **Tamar Zhvania**, Chair of the Central Election Commission of Georgia
- **Roman Banari**, General Secretary of the National Youth Council in Moldova

³ Chevalier, T. (2019), Political trust, young people and institutions in Europe. A multilevel analysis. Int J Soc Welfare, 28: 418-430. doi:[10.1111/ijsw.12380](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12380)

Moderator: Gennadiy Kosyak, Deputy Head of the Division of Elections and Civil Society, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe

Language: English only.

Date and Time: 28 September, 2020, 14:00 CET (GMT+2)/15:00 EEST (GMT+3)

Organiser: Division of Elections and Civil Society, Democratic Governance Department, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe

Participation:

This online public talk is intended first and foremost for the representatives of electoral management bodies from all CoE Member States.

The representatives of other national authorities and bodies such as ministries and agencies responsible for youth policy development and implementation who are interested in strategically promoting young people's electoral participation, as well as to other state and non-state actors, will also be invited.

Approximate number of expected participants: up to 100 persons.

Registration:

Open registration through public announcement on the Council of Europe website and on the Council of Europe Facebook page with further confirmation and provision of link to online presentation to selected participants.

Resources:

- 'Vote Outside The Box' toolkit [to be published on the eve of the online event]
- [URSO Council of Europe methodology for electoral cooperation](#)
- Council of Europe [Competences for Democratic Culture](#) Project