

Next Generation

Youth Voice

Political and Civic Engagement

What We Know Brief

May 2022



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LSE Consulting

Matt Cresswell, Senior Expert

Marit de Bruijne, Graphic Designer

Max Fras, Project Director

Elisabet Vives, Project Manager and Junior Expert

Amy White, Senior Expert

British Council

Isabelle Van de Gejuchte, Senior Adviser – Policy Engagement

Maria Nomikou, Sector Lead – Youth, Skills and Communities

James Perkins, Interim Head of Research – Research and Policy Insight

Reece Waldron, Interim Senior Research Adviser – Research and Policy Insight

Christine Wilson Interim Director – Director Research and Insight / Director Next Generation programme

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Next Generation research is driven by a desire to empower, and an understanding that in engaging with young people, and supporting their energy for positive change, we can all benefit.



Foreword

It's a pleasure for me to share with you the latest outputs from our Next Generation series.

At the British Council, we can see that young people across the world are active in transforming their own circumstances. Next Generation research engages with young people in order to support them in doing that. It does not look solely at the barriers facing them, nor does it view them simply as a way to drive the future economy of their country. A deficit approach to youth, or a purely instrumental one, is unhelpful and does not capture the true picture of their lives, and of their potential. Next Generation research is driven by a desire to empower, and an understanding that in engaging with young people, and supporting their energy for positive change, we can all benefit.

Next Generation has been running since 2009, and in that time we have listened to the voices of tens of thousands of young people from countries including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Vietnam, Myanmar, Germany, Colombia, Lebanon and the UK. Their insight has enabled colleagues working in those countries to ensure their programming is truly serving the needs of this vital demographic. We have also ensured the views of young people are shared with policy-makers and influencers locally.

These new What We Know briefs allow us to look beyond geographical boundaries and explore the themes that emerge time after time. We see that while there may be differences in their circumstances, young people across the world share similar views on areas such as education and employment, as well as on the challenges facing their generation. Their commitment to tackling those challenges shines through, as does their frustration that their voices are often missing from the conversation when policies that will affect them are being developed.

We still have a way to travel to ensure that this research is as participatory as it can be, that it reaches as many young people as possible, including those often excluded from public discourse, and that the findings are widely available and accessible.

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We reviewed the programme in 2020, and that review offered us a clear way forward, including on how we need to be more consistent in the data we gather, as well as being more creative in how we present the results. We view the three What We Know briefs as part of this renewed commitment to sharing common insights and engaging with youth organisations and policy-makers to support inclusive youth programming and policy-making.

At the time of writing, we have two new projects underway, in Pakistan and Indonesia, and we look forward to welcoming them to the Next Generation family. We are also embedding the Next Generation approach within our new global Young Leaders programmes, ensuring that all of our work with young people around the world is properly informed by their voices. Within and outside of the British Council, the examples of youth programming included as case studies in these briefs demonstrate how organisations are meeting the needs of young people. We hope that our Next Generation research continues to support this.

Beyond any one programme, I see Next Generation as absolutely central to our work in cultural relations. As well as actively listening to young people around the world, it enables those young people involved to enter into dialogue with their global peers. In seeking ways to co-operate on shared challenges, and through the exchange of ideas for solutions, this intercultural dialogue can help to build a better world. I will leave the final word to one of our Next Generation participants from Colombia, in a statement from 2018 that still resonates today: “I believe that all of us at some point dream of a country in peace, but peace is something that is built, by building relations to one another.”

Christine Wilson

Director, Research and Insight, British Council

Executive Summary

This What We Know brief explores the topic of Youth Voice (Political and Civic Engagement) from the perspectives of young people in Germany, Poland, Italy, Lebanon, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Vietnam as captured in research carried out by the British Council under its [Next Generation](#) programme. The research was analysed and summarised, and key findings presented and discussed by international groups of young people, youth practitioners and organisations and policy-makers at an online event in March 2022.

This brief contains an overview of relevant policy frameworks from major international organisations, summarises the key points of the research and presents some of the recommendations for action and next steps captured in the event's discussion groups. It is complemented by case study examples of inspiring programmes and projects connected to the themes of the research.

The research identified three key areas of primary importance to young people:

- **Underappreciation and disempowerment.** Young people feel their contributions, thoughts and opinions are not listened to or valued to the same extent as older generations, which restricts their ability to influence and shape the agenda.
- **The potential to engage.** There is a strong desire on the part of young people to work with policy-makers to help develop meaningful and relevant approaches to enhance their lives.
- **Informal politics as a platform to engage.** Rather than engage with formal politics, young people are finding different ways to make their voices heard, for example through activism and issues-based campaigning.

Reflections and recommendations both from the Next Generation research carried out and from the event discussion groups are highlighted. These focused on the need to build youth leadership capacity, to provide safe spaces for youth to experiment, make mistakes and find their way and to ensure the impacts of policy are fed back into future programming.

Two further What We Know briefs are published in this series: Local and Global Challenges and Education and Skills.



Next Generation Programme

The Next Generation programme is part of the British Council's commitment to exploring youth voice and choice. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policy-making.

The Next Generation research examines the conditions that support young people in becoming creative, fulfilled and active citizens in their countries during moments of change. The research looks at young people's views on:

- education, employment, lifestyle and their hopes and fears for their country;
- their degree of international engagement and opinions on the wider world; and
- the values and beliefs that affect their lives.

The Next Generation research uses a mixed-methodology approach to gathering data. The methodology and sample size vary slightly to suit each country and are detailed in each report. Next Generation reports include:

- a desk-based literature review; and
- a national survey with a diverse segment of the young population covering both urban and rural locations.

Each country report also relies on additional sources such as interviews and focus group discussions and includes a Youth Task Force advisory board with young people, youth organisations and other key youth stakeholders. Next Generation reports also produce a series of recommendations supporting policy change.

Since 2016, the Next Generation programme has conducted research in countries such as [Turkey](#), [Sri Lanka](#), [Zimbabwe](#) and the [United Kingdom](#). To see the full range of countries covered in the Next Generation portfolio, you can visit the British Council website [here](#).



It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policy-making.

Next Generation What We Know Briefs

To better understand and compare the aspirations and attitudes of young people from across the world, three What We Know briefs bring together findings and insights from our most recent reports and examine the global attitudes and opinions that young people have on Education and Skills, Local and Global Challenges, and Youth Voice (Political and Civic Engagement).

The What We Know briefs are based on a review and analysis of the latest Next Generation reports from [Germany](#), [Poland](#), [Italy](#), [Lebanon](#), [Nigeria](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Myanmar](#) and [Vietnam](#), and include:

- Desk research/literature review on the current global youth policy and strategy context relevant to the three identified Next Generation topics above.
- Case Studies of British Council and external policy and programming relevant to the three core Next Generation areas (understanding youth attitudes and aspirations, amplifying youth voice and supporting better youth policy-making).
- Reflections from three What We Know workshops that were carried out in March 2022 with a range of young people, youth organisations and policy-makers from across the world to discuss the findings identified from the Next Generation research, current practices and opportunities for action.

The table on the following page provides an overview of the samples used in the Next Generation countries analysed in this brief.

This What We Know brief focuses on young people's experiences of making their voices heard in their community and country contexts, from the civic and political perspective.

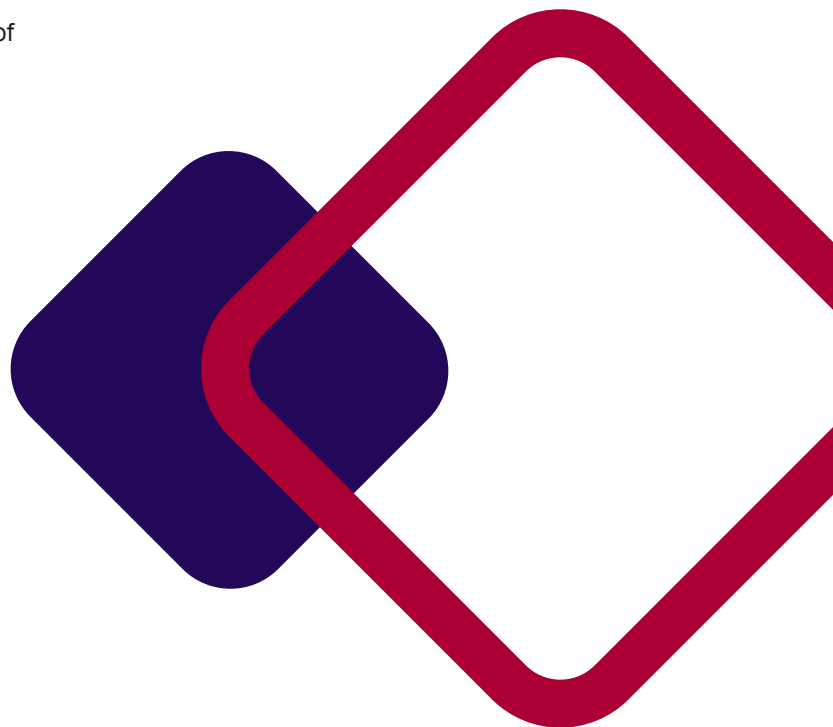


Table 1 Samples used in the Next Generation countries analysed in this brief

Next Gen Country	Year of Publication	Age of Participants	Scale of Data Collection
Ethiopia	2019	15-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2,332 survey respondents – 10 in-depth interviews (IDIs) (2 hours) – 8 workshops (6-8 participants each)
Germany	2019	18-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2,018 survey respondents – 24 digital diaries over a two-week period – 6 participants took part in qualitative follow-up to develop key themes emerging from their diaries
Italy	2020	18-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2,015 survey respondents – 5 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 10 participants each – 9 IDIs with young people – 2 interviews with heads of organisations – 13 IDIs with civic society stakeholders – 1 workshop with 35 participants
Lebanon	2021 (Next Steps) ¹	15-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 185 participants through 42 FGDs and 17 IDIs – 8 participants in key informant interviews (KIIs).
Myanmar	2019	18-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2,473 survey respondents – 10 FGDs with between 5 and 11 participants each – 20 KIIs – 5 one-day youth policy workshops with 20 participants each
Nigeria	2020	18-35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 5,001 survey respondents – 32 youth engagement workshops and IDIs – 237 online surveys – 18 online interviews – 24 participants' COVID diaries (3 diaries each)
Poland	2021	18-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2,000 survey respondents – 12 FGDs (92 participants) – Social media research of 17 Facebook groups
Vietnam	2020	16-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 15 stakeholder interviews – 1,200 survey respondents – 108 FGD participants – 20 IDIs – 1 validation workshop with advisory committee – 2 validation workshops with youth task force – 4 IDIs with young entrepreneurs

¹ This study reflects on the initial [Next Generation Lebanon report](#), published in 2020, that included 13 auto-driven photo elicitation interviews, 13 photovoice discussions with young people with 6-13 participants per discussion, and a survey involving 2,879 respondents, aged 15-29.

Policy Overview

There has been a real policy surge in the field of youth voice. Major international organisations, as well as many national governments, now pay increased attention to young people's agency and influence on their (own) lives. Similar ideas are often referred to using different labels, including 'youth voice', 'youth participation' and 'youth empowerment'. The key policy-maker focus is that policy-makers have not only realised that young people are a significant and distinct group or policy area that needs a tailored solution, but are now also working towards increasing young people's voice and influence on all policy areas and aspects of their daily lives.

The **European Union** has numerous policy initiatives in the fields of education, political and civic engagement and employment and skills. In recent years, with the arrival of the first EU Youth Strategy in 2010 followed by the second one in 2019, there has been a notable shift towards political and civic engagement, which is framed by the EU as youth participation, active citizenship and youth empowerment as a priority policy area permeating all other areas of EU action for youth.

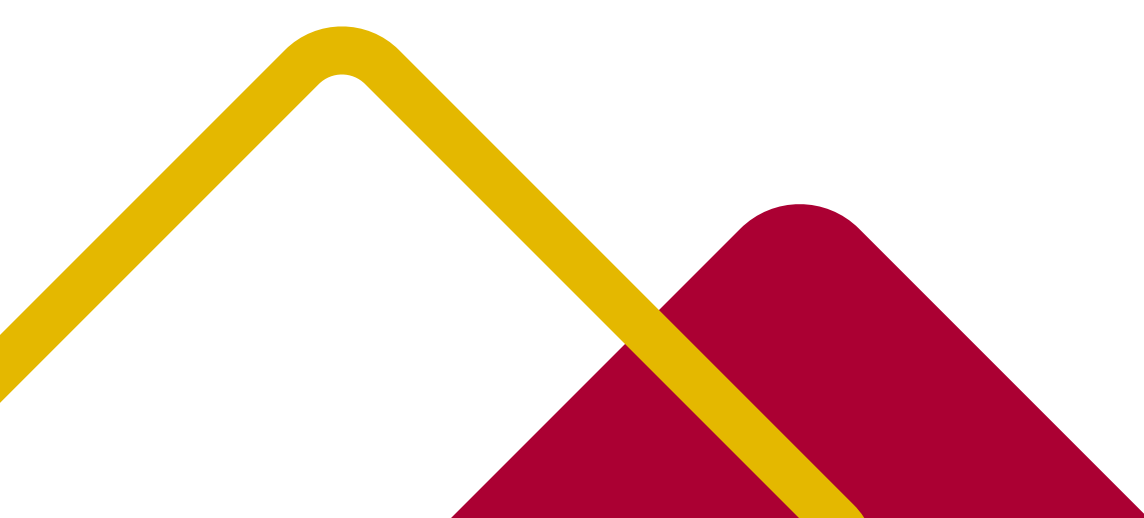
Furthermore, the EU's flagship youth initiative - EU Youth Dialogue - involves young people, youth organisations and policy-makers in joint discussion on all areas of policy-making.

In EU's external action, youth participation is also gaining prominence with the establishment of the first EU Youth Sounding Board by the EU's international development department (DG International Partnerships) in 2021, and the planned launch of the EU's first global Youth Action Plan (YAP) (Youth in External Action). The YAP aims to put youth out there with the already-established policy areas such as gender, human rights and sustainable development, possibly as a cross-cutting consideration.

In light of the opportunities and challenges afforded by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has designated 2022 the European Year of Youth. This initiative intends to recognise the importance of youth voice and role in the process and planning of COVID recovery, as well as in achieving needed progress in key areas - for a greener, digital and more inclusive future. These areas are reflected in NG participants' calls for 21st-century skills and equity of access to education in the education and skills brief. In local and global challenges, the exclusion of certain youth voices from policy discussions is based on their identity (for example disabled or LGBT youth), which validates the relevance of the EU Year priorities.

The EU intends, in cooperation with the European Parliament, member states, regional and local authorities, stakeholders and young people themselves:

- to honour and support the generation that has sacrificed the most during the pandemic, giving them new hopes, strength and confidence in the future by highlighting how the green and digital transitions offer renewed perspectives and opportunities;
- to encourage all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, from disadvantaged backgrounds, from rural or remote areas, or belonging to vulnerable groups, to become active citizens and actors of positive change;
- to promote opportunities provided by EU policies for young people to support their personal, social and professional development. The European Year of Youth will go hand in hand with the successful implementation of NextGenerationEU in providing quality jobs, education and training opportunities.



The **United Nations** is also paying increased attention to youth participation and youth voice. The UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth is a recent UN initiative, established in 2013, in recognition of the world's growing youth population and the need for the UN system to engage with young people. The Envoy serves as a global advocate for addressing the needs and rights of young people, as well as for bringing the UN closer to them. Together with the World Programme of Action for Youth, they constitute a policy umbrella for a range of youth-related initiatives.

The **Council of Europe (CoE)** puts youth empowerment at the heart of its youth policy. CoE operates a unique co-management system in the youth sector. Co-management means that all decisions on policy and implementation are taken jointly with representatives of young people and youth organisations. The co-management system is an example of participatory democracy in practice for the entire youth sector within the Council of Europe. The CoE co-management system in the youth sector is a place for common reflection and co-production, combining the voice of young Europeans and that of public authorities responsible for youth issues, leading to a sharing and evaluation of the experience.

Furthermore, CoE developed a range of policy instruments such as the **European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life**, to foster commitment from local and regional authorities to build a culture where young people are able to contribute in different ways. CoE has also developed similar instruments in human rights education and youth inclusion, further promoting youth voice at the local level.

The **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** is analysing the role and position of young people in all of its member states and beyond. In response to rising youth unemployment and worsening socio-economic conditions, OECD has also proposed to develop an OECD Recommendation to promote a government-wide strategy to support young people as part of a wider OECD Youth Action Plan aiming to address youth issues in its member countries. The proposed Recommendation will aim to strengthen youth policies and outcomes in relevant policy areas, including employment and education policies, social policies and public governance. The Recommendation will be elaborated by the relevant OECD committees through appropriate coordination and consultation with stakeholders, including the OECD social partner advisory committees - Business at OECD (BIAC) and Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC).

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Young people are a significant and distinct group or policy area that needs a tailored solution.

Findings

Underappreciation and disempowerment of young people

Despite the progress made through youth policy and institutions highlighted above, these changes are not felt by all young people surveyed in Next Generation research. Young people across the world feel that their inputs into the societies and communities where they live are frequently ignored and discounted. This happens for a variety of reasons, but age and status of youth as a group are significant factors, along with other characteristics such as socioeconomic status and gender. Furthermore, young people put the blame firmly on inadequate structures and support received.

Key issues identified by young people

- **Age remains a key characteristic** in defining voice and influence in society and communities across many countries in the world; other considerations such as experience in a given field matter less, when age is taken into account. Young people feel that older cohorts have significantly more power and discount the voices of young people by virtue of age alone, and intergenerational tensions exist over power and resources, especially in very young and rapidly ageing societies. In Vietnam, young people perceive that hierarchical societal norm mean opportunities for voice and influence are limited, and 80% of young people agree their parents are generally right.
- Although there are significant country differences, there is a **disconnect between often successful and optimistic outlooks on personal and professional lives and less optimistic and more resigned attitudes towards politics**. 80% of Polish youth felt they have less influence on the social and political context than on their private lives. Many Italian youths described a feeling of powerlessness. In Lebanon, the optimism documented at the time of the October 2019 uprising has dissipated and an overall feeling remains that they cannot influence the system.
- **Many young people feel disempowered by political and social structures**, reporting that they feel that 'politics is not for them', especially with regard to formal engagement with politics. Nearly a third of Nigerians polled classified themselves as 'politically apathetic' - relatively uninterested and extremely unengaged in politics and their

community. Lebanese youth and Ethiopian youth typically report being unaware of youth policy. Despite stating that opportunities for young people to contribute at a civic, and particularly political, level are restricted, 75% of the Next Generation cohort in Vietnam said they feel empowered and want to make their own rules, reflecting a growing sense of autonomy.

- Because of the way political systems have been set up, **trust in politicians remains low** across the board (for example 20% Italian youth trust political parties), and political parties and political institutions struggle to convey their messages to young people. The decline of trust in public institutions is not just a youth issue, however, and is widely reported as a global trend.² This contrasts with young people's declared interest in politics - reported by many Italian youths for example.
- Young people feel that **youth participation is treated as a privilege rather than a right**. In many places, young people need to take action and intervene through their engagement to gain participation rights and access to decision-making. In Ethiopia, where young people feel they must earn a voice, young women and youth with disabilities face additional stigma and gender norms that restrict their ability to make themselves heard. Barriers to young women's political participation are identified in Myanmar, and personal security concerns in Nigeria for female electoral candidates, or those representing marginalised groups. Youth in Myanmar and Lebanon note that many parents restrict young people's political activity (or activity potentially perceived as such) out of concerns for safety.
- **Young people are usually more connected to their communities and feel closer to local decision-making**. The further away they are from the policy structure, the less likely they are to identify and engage, from national/federal governments to the international level. In Myanmar, young people feel a sense of personal agency and a desire to contribute to their communities.

Issues around inclusion of young people's voices and lack of support for their engagement are also covered in the What We Know briefs focussing on Education and Skills and Local and Global Challenges, published as part of this series.

2 For more information on trends in institutional trust, see [here](#).

Case study 1



Wymiennikownia Youth Centre

Policy / Programme: Wymiennikownia Youth Centre

Dates: 2013 - present

Locations: Poland

Institutions: Gdynia City Council - local authority of Gdynia, a city in northern Poland

Case study 1 highlights a bottom-up approach to establishing a truly youth-led, youth run centre. As the centre has matured, youth have expanded their input to other city initiatives, including participatory budgeting and international mobility projects.

Evidence Overview

Quality methods

- Participatory
- Stimulating local youth engagement
- Widening youth participation

NG-relevant impact

- Promotion of youth voice in policy and programming
- Youth civic and political engagement

Sustainability of results

- From a one-year project to a permanent structure
- Running for 9 years now
- Youth centre managed by young people themselves
- Young people participate in budgeting

Wymiennikownia (WM) is a local youth centre in Gdynia, Poland. The primary goal of the WM Youth Centre is to support the bottom-up initiatives of the local youth, helping young people to implement their ideas, share hobbies, and fulfil their passions.

Origins:

The youth centre was set up by the city of Gdynia as a pilot project to drive youth participation in the city, following a project to develop peer education, youth participation, drug prevention, and extracurricular activity. Since then, young people have moved from being 'clients' to now running the youth centre with the assistance of the local authority (Gdynia - a city on the Baltic Sea coast in Poland). They adjusted the centre's opening hours to better match their free time. They designed the interiors of the centre based on their own ideas. They prepare the schedule of workshops and events in WM based on the proposals submitted by young and active citizens of Gdynia through an independent decision-making process.

Mutual responsibility and skills and knowledge exchange is at the heart of the approach to running the centre, as captured in their mantra: "I can do something and show you how to do it too, and I can also learn something through teaching you." Young people involved in the WM activities also support other city projects and participate in European mobility projects to expand their learning. Some of the young and committed leaders from the centre have since been formally hired to coordinate and look after the place in the coming years.

The evolution of the WM centre has embraced young people's role in all activities of the local authority across sectors and activities, including participatory budgeting, volunteering at events and festivals, organising mobility activities with other countries etc.

WYMIENNIKOWNIA Further information is available [here](#) (in Polish).



Significant potential for more youth political and civic engagement

Despite the barriers noted above, young people across the globe are united in their will to be more socially and politically engaged. Young people are eager to take all the opportunities they can to influence their own lives and that of their countries and communities. They are also willing to identify challenges to participation and to offer solutions (especially outside formal politics - see point 3 - informal politics as a platform for greater youth engagement).



Key issues identified by young people

- Despite structural barriers identified above, **young people are eager to find ways to engage politically** and in the civic sphere in their countries and communities. In Vietnam, 56% of Vietnamese youth engage in residential community development, for example.
- **Young people want the institutions and structures of power to pay more attention to their needs and interests**, including by developing communications and strategies that speak to them. 51% of German youth say that politics only reflects some of what matters to them, and 65% of Polish youth report that politics does not address issues that matter most to them.
- **Young people want to work together with policy-makers** to be better represented by them, including by standing for office. In Nigeria, youth are politically ambitious and the 'Not Too Young to Run' Bill has lowered age restrictions. Significant recent increases in youth elected to office in Nigeria is making a difference, though the cost of campaigns is prohibitive.
- **Young people want to be more engaged in policies and issues affecting their communities.** 90% of young people reported the importance of contributing to their society or communities, and 85% that young people should be involved in community issues (Myanmar). Family and community spaces are the areas that Ethiopian youth most want a voice in.
- **Young people are more likely to pursue progressive and reform agendas**, but in many places they also side with more conservative and moderate agendas. In Italy, youth are keen to engage on issues of social inclusion and rights, and Polish youth reported that participation and mobilisation could challenge racism, xenophobia and homophobia. One third of youth in Poland want to see radical change, though over half want that change to be gradual.

Case study 2



Council of Europe - co-management system

Policy / Programme: Council of Europe - co-management system

Dates: permanent

Locations: All CoE Member States

Institutions: CoE Joint Council on Youth, CoE Advisory Council on Youth

Case study 2 is a rare example of a mechanism for youth voice in all fields of policy. The co-management system is a permanent structure and is a means to give young people an equal say.

Evidence Overview

Quality methods

- Youth participation
- Cross-institution working

NG-relevant impact

- Youth political and civic engagement - young people directly impacting policy

Sustainability of results

- Permanent structure

The Council of Europe's two main organs (statutory decision-making bodies) are the Committee of Ministers, comprising the foreign ministers of each member state, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), composed of members of the national parliaments of each of the 47 member states. Both bodies have been instrumental in the development of the Council of Europe's youth policy framework.

Although the Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation where the main decision-making power rests with governments, it operates a unique co-management system in the youth sector that shares decision-making power on policy matters with young people and youth organisations. The co-management system provides a space for common reflection and co-production, combining the voice of young Europeans and that of public authorities responsible for youth issues through a sharing

and evaluation of experiences. Thanks to this dialogue, where each party has an equal say, ideas and experiences are exchanged in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect, giving legitimacy to the decisions of the main CoE policy-making body in the field of youth – the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ).

The co-management system relies on regular and quality inputs from youth organisations, governments, Council of Europe institutions and other key partners. The key co-management institutions are the Joint Council on Youth, composed of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Programming Committee on Youth (CPJ).

The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)

brings together representatives of ministries or bodies responsible for youth matters from the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention. The CDEJ fosters cooperation between governments in the youth sector and provides a framework for comparing national youth policies, exchanging best practices and drafting standard-setting texts.

The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) brings together 30 young people - representatives of non-governmental youth organisations and networks. It provides opinions and input from youth NGOs on all youth sector activities and ensures that young people are involved in the Council's activities.

The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) is the co-managed body which brings together the CCJ and the CDEJ. The Joint Council takes the decisions on the youth sector's priorities, programmes and budget.

The Programming Committee on Youth (CPJ) consists of eight government representatives from the CDEJ and eight non-governmental representatives from the CCJ (young people).



Further information is available [here](#).

Informal politics as a platform for greater youth engagement

Young people are increasingly choosing informal ways of engaging with politics. Instead of formal methods of engagement through political party membership, voting and standing in elections, more and more young people are taking to other channels and platforms, including social media and issue-based campaigns such as the climate emergency, Black Lives Matter and anti-war movements.

Key issues identified by young people

- When political structures do not provide adequate channels for youth engagement, **young people seek alternatives**. Informal alternatives for youth engagement vary from country to country, and include mass protest, digital activism and community-level activism. Young Italians seem to prefer taking part in protests (22%), engaging in online activism (29%) and signing petitions (30%). In Poland, NG participants express that participation and mobilisation are crucial to creating change, as well as challenging xenophobic, racist and homophobic attitudes publicly and among friends and family by talking openly with those who hold opposing views.
- Instead of joining political parties, **young people rally around issues of interest**: global warming, racial justice, conflict etc. Youth are more than willing to engage in civic activism on global issues that matter to them like climate change, with the School strike for climate or Fridays for Future igniting mass and continued protest to demand climate action from policy-makers. In Poland, climate change was the most commonly cited global threat by survey respondents (just under 40 per cent). A worry that Germany is not taking enough of a leadership role in tackling global warming and switching to green energy sources was also expressed.
- In Vietnam, 69% of young people see themselves as contributing to Vietnam's future through **good environmental stewardship**, though only 14% rank climate change in their top 5 priority issues. There are further comments on global and local challenges that matter to youth, in the Global-Local challenges brief.
- In many countries, **political parties are seen as insufficiently representative, whilst civil society groups and informal movements are seen as more open and inclusive**. In the WWK events, we heard from the organisation Voices of Young Refugees in Europe, that advocates for young refugees and is also able to network and advocate on behalf of refugee organisations in Europe.
- Especially in non-democratic contexts, **social media provides an important space for young people to express their views** and to organise themselves for a shared purpose, although with its own risks such as trolling and state surveillance. In Vietnam, social media is an important tool for youth expression.

Case study 3



Global Youth Letter

Policy / Programme: [Global Youth Letter](#) and 8000 Rising Campaign – part of [The Climate Connection](#)

Dates: 2020 - 2022

Locations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, UK, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Institutions: British Council

COP 26 afforded an important opportunity for youth voice on climate policy. The Global Youth Letter programme, and accompanying campaign has enabled digital contributions to the letter, and the accompanying campaign.

Evidence Overview

Quality methods

- Diverse and inclusive
- Engagement of marginalised groups
- Transnational partnership and collaboration

NG-relevant impact

- Promotion of youth voice in policy and programming
- Youth civic and political engagement

Sustainability of results

- Establishment of research partnerships enabling engagement of grassroots youth organisations across participating countries
- [Young people can still contribute](#)

Young people identify climate change as one of the most pressing challenges facing the world today. Global Youth Letter seeks to promote youth agency, particularly for marginalised youth, to contribute their concerns and proposals for tackling the climate crisis. This was underpinned by findings from an initial research - youth consultation.

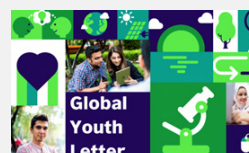
Global Youth Letter has created an action plan for climate change formulated from the different perspectives, aspirations, hopes and ideas of young people under 35 throughout the participating countries. The Letter and action plan were developed from the youth consultation carried out in early 2021 by the British Council working in partnership with [Catalyst in Communities](#). Online consultation remains open at the time of writing.

The Letter was launched at an online event in September 2021 by youth climate leaders, targeting policy makers, decision-makers and world leaders with concrete proposals for action. The 8,000 Rising campaign has since invited young people globally to add their own reflections, voices and pledges on climate action.

More than **8000 young people** have participated through surveys, focus groups and interviews across **23 countries**, whilst more than **15,000 young people** from 98 countries have contributed to the further development of the programme through the 8,000 Rising campaign. The Global Youth Letter has enabled more than **200 research partnerships** to be established.

Insights from the Letter and from the 8,000 Rising follow-up formed part of the UN's Children and Youth statement at the UN's Youth Conference in October 2021. The outcomes were presented at COP26 in Glasgow and at Youth COP in Milan. The Letter is not the end of the process however: it continues to generate debate, discussion, ideas and engagement through the continuation of the 8,000 Rising campaign.

Further information: See Global Youth Letter on [YouTube](#) and the [British Council website](#).



The research and campaign were also featured in The Climate Connection's Global Knowledge Exchange in March 2022.

Reflections and Recommendations

Next Generation reports

The following recommendations were identified in the Next Generation reports analysed and are directed to policy-makers, youth practitioners and organisations:

- Encourage youth participation and collective action to **refresh politics and civil society**. This could include programmes with incentives such as student class credits for volunteering for example.
- **Increase opportunities** for young people to occupy governance and leadership positions. In the case of access to elected positions in government, this might also mean reducing legal barriers on age, and the costs associated with campaigning.
- **Develop young people's capacity** to engage in politics: training, awareness-raising, information provision. This could also include improving the accessibility of political information.
- **Develop a more focused and targeted approach** to including and amplifying young voices at election times.
- **Implement more user-centred design approaches** that put young people at the centre of community development programmes.
- **Promote the inclusion of diverse groups** in policy discussions about the regulation of digital platforms. Freedom of expression and diversity of opinion is greater on digital platforms and reported by youth.
- **Improve voter registration and ownership** of political processes.
- **Establish and communicate the accessibility of and safety in political processes**, where political activity is perceived as unsafe.
- **Educate youth** and highlight the purpose and impact of political participation. This could include media programmes emphasising the benefits to young people and the country of youth civic and political activism.
- **Increase youth leadership** within political parties and structures.
- **Drive up the youth vote.**



Next Generation What We Know Local and Global Challenges event

The findings and recommendations from the Next Generation programme were discussed with 18 attendees on the 17th of March 2022 in an online event that involved policy-makers, youth practitioners and organisations and young people. The event was built around discussion groups based on a “trialogue” format, which is designed to bring together and provide an equal footing and voice for each of the three stakeholder groups. Equipping young people, youth practitioners and policy-makers with a safe space to propose, assert, reject or influence the discussion recognises each stakeholder group as an equal, so that no group’s voice has more sway or agency than the other.

The reflections and recommendations developed through the triologue discussions include:

- Young people are too old to make mistakes and too young to make decisions. Young people need **safe spaces to try things out** and find their way.
- There is a need to **invest in young people’s capacity** and to participate and provide mentorship for youth leadership positions.
- Policy-makers need to **close the feedback loop** by ensuring results of policy are fed back into the policy-making process.
- **Entry points for young people** to engage with policy-making need to be signposted so that youth can be engaged and heard.
- We need to **capitalise on moments of change**. Young people are often leaders of change and this can be harnessed to increase and encourage further youth participation.

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LSE Consulting is the consultancy arm of the London School of Economics (LSE). LSE is a specialist university with a global reach and an international intake of students and staff from over 148 countries across the globe. LSE has a long-standing, international reputation for the quality and depth of its research and teaching, which encompass the full breadth of the social sciences field: from economics, politics and law to sociology, anthropology, accounting and finance.

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The British Council

The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

The **Next Generation series** is part of the British Council's commitment to exploring youth voice and choice. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policy-making. The reports focus on young people in countries experiencing a period of significant change, to ensure that young people's voices are heard and their interests represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives.

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