

THEY VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME, BUT NOT THE LAST –

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND BEST PRACTICES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

This year ACEEO celebrates its 30th anniversary by looking forward, to the future of democracy and elections, to the youth. Today's first voters will shape tomorrow's democracy, it is therefore paramount to understand how the youth think, what attitudes they have, and how their meaningful engagement might be increased. The issue is highly complex; it involves various topics ranging from voter education to the constitutional-regulative background. Moreover, the target group requires to adapt in the means as well, namely, platforms and the style of communications needs to be chosen carefully.

The present draft concept includes the various themes and means we may wish to include in our year ahead, as well as a rough timeline. It is to be noted, that the focus of the project will be set together with our partners – to this end, the current draft concept serves more as a 'menu'.

Themes and questions

- *Voter education: shaping democratic knowledge, competences and attitudes* – What background do young people have – what experiences do they bring from their communities (e.g. schools, family)? What are the biggest gaps in their knowledge, competences, and attitudes? How could these be improved?
- *Communications* – What is the most effective style and platform of communications? What are the biggest challenges, most effective best practices?
- *Constitutional/Legal framework* – What are the Theoretical and practical pros and cons of the age limits? What are the experiences with lowering these? How special voting arrangements might boost participation?

Means

- *Developing e-learning materials* – With the participation of the target group and primary- and secondary school teachers and with special regards to possible gamification options.
- *Developing communications platforms – FIRSTVOTER.ORG 2.0* – Including primary platforms (e.g. application and/or webpage such as firstvoter.org) as well as secondary platforms (Facebook page, Twitter, etc.).
- *Launching campaigns* – Tailored specially to the target group (short videos, or even memes).
- *Community building* – Organizing events capable of boosting both knowledge, competences, and attitudes, such as debate circles, election-simulations, camps.
- *Conference – Online webinars* – With the meaningful participation of the target group.

Timeline

- February – Presenting the concept, processing feedbacks
- March – Setting the focus with EMBs and other partners.
- April-June – Starting the implementation of the chosen means.
- September – Annual conference (with the participation of the target group), interim report.
- September – November – Finishing implementation.