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France

NATIONAL LEVEL ASSESSMENT REPORT



France National Level Assessment Report

Findings from the National Level Assessment on the level of awareness, gaps in knowledge, and barriers to participation amongst young people in civic democratic life and decision-making processes in France and Europe

PLACE Network



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The ParticipACTION Project

The **ParticipACTION** “*Building Inclusive Civic Engagement and Solidarity Among Diverse Young People in Europe*” project is co-funded by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program (CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV).

The project’s core aims to enhance youth engagement in European decision-making processes and create opportunities for young people to connect with policymakers at local, national, and European levels through research initiatives, roundtables, workshops, and training sessions on policy and advocacy. The project targets young people aged 16 to 23. It seeks to involve not only European citizens but also young individuals with migratory backgrounds or coming from non-EU countries, with a special focus on women and girls. By bringing together these diverse groups of young people, the project aims to foster mutual understanding of shared experiences and barriers to democratic participation, ultimately promoting solidarity. The goal of the project is to equip young people with the tools to influence EU democratic processes, while promoting a bottom-up approach that ensures their lived realities are at the heart of policy decisions.

The ParticipACTION project is implemented in Italy, France, Cyprus and Lithuania by a consortium of five experienced partners. The project runs from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2026.

Project Partners

IRC Italia – Fondazione International Rescue Committee Italia ETS – Coordinator (Italy)

G.F.C. - Generation For Change CY - (Cyprus)

PLACE - PLACE Network - (France)

GLOCAL FACTORY - GLOCAL FACTORY Società Cooperativa Sociale - (Italy)

MANO EUROPA – Asociacija Mano Europa - (Lithuania)

Executive Summary

The ParticipACTION project is designed to amplify young voices (aged 16-23), particularly those of third-country nationals (TCNs), migrant youth, women, and girls, in decision-making processes across local, national, and EU levels. This report, based on desk research, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and interviews conducted in France, explores young people's awareness, knowledge, and involvement in democratic life, the barriers they encounter, and proposed solutions.

Key findings indicate that many young people in France possess **limited knowledge of EU institutions and programmes** like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, with significant knowledge gaps persisting despite a growing sense of European citizenship among some. Engagement levels vary, showing a trend towards **stronger involvement in local initiatives** due to a more tangible sense of belonging, while the EU is often perceived as complex and distant. Major barriers to participation include **administrative complexity, misconceptions about programme eligibility, and significant psychological barriers** where youth do not perceive themselves as legitimate participants in EU spaces. Social inequalities, discrimination, and economic insecurity disproportionately affect marginalised groups, further limiting their involvement.

Proposed solutions from young people and stakeholders consistently underscore the need for **increased civic education, direct exposure to EU institutions, peer-to-peer learning, and proactive, inclusive outreach**. Recommendations for policymakers focus on strengthening civic education, implementing inclusive policies addressing social inequalities, building trust through transparency, and providing adequate material and mentorship support to ensure equitable access to opportunities for all young people.

Table of Contents

1. Background	6
1.1 National Level Assessment Report overview	6
1.2 The French Context	6
2. Methodology	7
2.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	7
2.2 Survey	8
2.3 Desk Research	9
2.4 Interviews	10
2.5 Interactive Seminars	10
2.6 National Roundtables	10
3. Challenges and Limitations	11
4. Key Findings	11
4.1 Knowledge	11
4.1.1. Knowledge of European Institutions, Rule of Law and Fundamental Values of EU	12
4.1.2 Knowledge of Opportunities for Active Engagement of Young People	13
4.2 Participation	14
4.2.1 Voting, Parties and Representative Structures	14
4.2.2 Advocacy and Non-Electoral Participation	14
4.2.3 Motivations for Participation and Role of Community	14
4.2.4 Reasons Behind Low Participation	15
4.3 Barriers	15
4.3.1 Tangible Barriers	15
4.3.2 Intangible Barriers	16
Cross-Cutting Themes	17
5. Focus Areas and Solutions	18
5.1 Youth Proposals to foster solidarity and civic participation	18
6. Conclusion	21
7. Bibliography	23
Annex 1: Desk Research Questions	26



Annex 2: Survey Questions

27

1. Background

1.1 National Level Assessment Report overview

The National Level Assessment Report aims at combining the various research phases of the ParticipACTION project, including desk research, FGDs, survey, interviews, interactive seminars and national roundtables. It furthers the initial overview, elaborated in the desk research, of the level of awareness, gaps in knowledge and barriers to participation amongst young people from diverse backgrounds in civic democratic life and decision-making processes in Europe, with the original data collected by PLACE Network during WP1, WP2 and WP3. The National Level Assessment Report will also offer an overview of the suggested solutions to the obstacles that hinder youth participation, offered by the youth themselves.

1.2 The French Context

France, as the oldest immigration country in Europe, has long been shaped by successive waves of migration that continue to influence its social fabric and political life. From the late 19th century onward, the country relied on immigration to compensate for labour shortages, with large inflows from neighbouring Germany and Belgium, later joined by Italians and Poles in the interwar years to support the rebuilding of the country and sustain industries like mining, construction, and metallurgy. Post-World War II migration diversified further, with workers arriving from Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and later Sub-Saharan Africa. The colonial past and the decision to stop labour migration in 1974 gave rise to family reunification and settlement of many non-European migrants.

Today, France's migration landscape continues to evolve, with new arrivals from Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Near East alongside established communities. Nonetheless, the history of colonialism and earlier migration waves still shape demographics: nearly half of immigrants in France today come from just seven countries, predominantly Algeria (12.7%), Morocco (12%), and Portugal (8.6%). Among immigrants who arrived in 2019, 41% were born in Africa and 32% in Europe, with the largest groups coming from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Italy, Spain, the UK, China, and Romania (Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, n.d.).

The ParticipACTION project's core objective is to **equip young people (aged 16-23) with the tools to influence EU democratic processes**, ensuring their lived realities are central to policy decisions through a bottom-up approach. A key element is the promotion of solidarity by enhancing mutual understanding of shared barriers to democratic participation. Special emphasis is placed on understanding how intersecting identity factors, such as migration status, gender, and socio-economic background, uniquely affect young individuals' awareness, knowledge, and involvement in democratic life, particularly for TCNs, migrant youth, women, and girls. France, with its diverse and multicultural society, history of political activism, and contemporary challenges like social inequalities, structural racism, and rising populism, provides a crucial context for this study. These structural conditions shape how young people, particularly those from marginalised groups and TCN backgrounds, relate to civic engagement. Many face limited access to information, reduced trust in institutions, and a strong sense that political spaces are not open or responsive to them. For TCNs and other marginalised youth, these experiences can lead to disengagement or hesitation in participating in public life. Understanding how these overlapping factors influence young people's perceptions and opportunities is essential to gain a better understanding of the broader patterns of youth civic participation in France today.

2. Methodology

This section details the mixed-methods approach and methodology used for the various research phases, including FGDs, survey, desk research, interviews, interactive seminars, and national roundtables and gives an overview of participants' demographics.

2.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were designed to explore in greater depth the lived experiences, perceptions, and proposals of young people regarding civic and political participation. These discussions allowed participants to express their perspectives in their own words and engage in collective reflection, offering rich qualitative insights that complemented the findings of the desk review.

The organisation and analysis of the FGDs was guided by intersectionality. Participants were intentionally selected to reflect a range of intersecting identities, including gender, migration status, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. This approach aimed to grasp how overlapping forms of exclusion or privilege shape youth engagement with civic and political life.

Four semi-structured FGDs were conducted in Paris in December 2024, each lasting approximately 2 hours with 7-8 diverse participants (aged 16-23) in terms of nationality, migratory status, gender, and socio-economic background. Discussions covered awareness of EU institutions, experiences

with civic participation, and proposed solutions. The sessions were semi-structured and based on open-ended questions covering three themes:

- **Knowledge** of EU institutions and strategies
- **Participation** in civic or political life (e.g., voting, protests, volunteering)
- **Proposed solutions** to encourage solidarity and youth engagement

Each session was guided by open-ended questions that encourage peer reflection and personal storytelling. The composition of each group was as follows:

- **FGD 1** (04/12/2024): 7 participants (4 females, 3 males) from Algeria, France, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Guinea;
- **FGD 2** (06/12/2024): All young women (16-22) from Turkey, Algeria, Portugal;
- **FGD 3** (04/12/2024): All-female group (16-20) from Algeria, France, Tunisia;
- **FGD 4** (06/12/2024): 8 participants (2 males, 6 females) with immigrant backgrounds from Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Bangladesh.

Some participants highlighted that their families had little engagement in civic or political life, and that their own awareness and interest only developed recently, often through education or peer discussion. As one participant explained:

“Personally, in terms of politics, I come from a family who are not very involved, who only vote to vote, to see who’s in politics. And I’m interested in it, apart from last year when I was choosing my specialities. It allowed me to open my mind and to tell myself that we had to get involved, that we had to make demands, that our voice had a real importance.” (FGD 1, female participant)

2.2 Survey

A survey – common to all four countries involved in the ParticipACTION project - was administered online via email, WhatsApp, and social media, aiming to include harder-to-reach groups. It featured multiple-choice and open-ended questions on EU awareness, participation, and perceptions of opportunities. A total of 59 respondents took part, including 49 women and 10 men. Data collection took place between December 2024 and January 2025. The survey was bilingual (French & English versions).

Respondents were requested to answer a total of 20 questions:¹

- 4 demographics questions to disaggregate data at the analysis stage (gender, country of origin, country of residence, age);
- 11 closed and open-ended questions on the topic of awareness of European institutions, action plans, and strategies;

¹ The full text of the survey can be found in Annex 2.

- 4 closed and open-ended questions on their participation in European civic democratic life;
- 1 open-ended question on the topic of solidarity and the respondents' personal experiences with it.

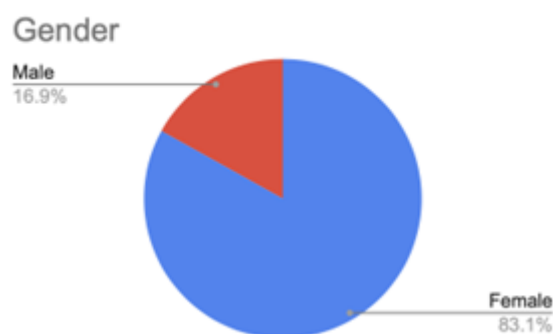


Fig. A

2.3 Desk Research

A systematic review of existing literature, including grey literature, academic articles, and policy documents relevant to youth civic engagement in France. Sources were selected based on credibility, relevance, timeliness, geographic focus, and availability in French and English. When selecting and analysing sources, a particular attention was paid to the different factors, such as migration background, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status influence on young people's opportunities and obstacles in civic and political life. This approach helped ensure that the review captured the diversity of experiences among youth in France, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion.

Each subsection of the desk research was guided by a set of dedicated research questions, organised across three core dimensions, which are available in Annex 1. The desk research was compiled in a standalone report, disseminated in April 2025. The insights from the desk research informed the design and implementation of the focus groups (Section 2.1) and survey (Section 2.2).

2.4 Interviews

Two qualitative interviews were conducted with key stakeholders working in the field of youth engagement. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted in person using a semi-structured format to allow for both guided discussion and open reflection. The questions focused on three main areas:

- Observed barriers to youth civic and political participation, especially for TCNs and marginalised groups;
- Strategies and entry points for enhancing youth engagement and solidarity;
- Reflections on existing institutional frameworks, programmes, and communication practices.

2.5 Interactive Seminars

Two awareness-raising Interactive Seminars were conducted by PLACE Network in Paris on February 9 and March 9, 2025, engaged 28 participants, including youth (16-23), focusing on young migrant women and TCNs. A Mentimeter poll identified top themes:

- 1) Education, Culture, Youth & Sport;
- 2) Migration;
- 3) Values, Rights, Rule of Law & Security.

The themes chosen by the young people in France during the interactive seminars **mirror the same priorities defined for the overall project.**

2.6 National Roundtables

One national roundtable was organised on 14 May 2025, involving 19 participants, including youth (16-23), especially girls, women, and TCNs, and various stakeholders. The roundtable presented national assessment findings and fostered discussions on including diverse youth in policy making related to the three key themes identified in the seminars.

Ethical Considerations: Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including minors, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed of the research purpose and their right to withdraw.

3. Challenges and Limitations

Research on youth civic knowledge and participation in France, particularly among young women and TCNs, presents several unique challenges and limitations linked to the socio-political landscape and structural characteristics of the country.

The research process encountered several limitations:

- **Engagement issues:** Some participants expressed apathy or a belief that their participation would not make a difference. To address this challenge, we worked with young-led organizations and peer networks to outreach young people.

Engaging youth not initially interested in civic issues was challenging. To address this, we introduced the research topic through everyday, local concerns and personal experiences, rather than relying on institutional language that might create further distance or alienation.

- **Material constraints** (e.g., needing to work, travel distance) and **a lack of belief in one's own ability** also impeded involvement. Insufficient support from immediate environments (parents, school counsellors) was noted. When travel posed a barrier, we selected central and easily accessible locations and, where possible, provided transport support - as was the case for one participant who travelled from Lyon to Paris.
- **Data collection and analysis limitations:** The small sample size of FGDs and the survey limits the generalisability of findings. To overcome this limitation, we conducted two rounds of FGDs to include a broader and more diverse range of participants and strengthen the depth and reliability of the findings.

4. Key Findings

The synthesis of desk research, FGDs, surveys, interviews, and the national roundtable offers a detailed understanding of youth civic engagement in France, highlighting areas of **knowledge (4.1)**, **participation (4.2)**, and existing **barriers (4.3)**.

4.1 Knowledge

This section examines how young people in France understand European institutions, policies, legislative actions, and strategies, as well as possible gaps in their knowledge and current attitudes toward the EU. It relies on the latest data available, policy reports, academic studies as well as

testimonials from the youth participants to the ParticipACTION events and findings from the ParticipACTION survey.

4.1.1. Knowledge of European Institutions, Rule of Law and Fundamental Values of EU

Young people in France exhibit a partial and uneven awareness **of European Union (EU) institutions and policies**, alongside significant knowledge gaps, particularly among marginalized groups. The ParticipACTION survey results, which gathered responses from 59 young people, predominantly women (83%) aged 16 to 23 with diverse country backgrounds living in France, indicate that nearly all respondents (around 100%) recognised the European Parliament and Erasmus+. However, familiarity with institutions like the European Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights, and petitions to the European Parliament was only moderate (60-70%), while fewer than half (under 50%) were aware of the European Commission, Council of Europe, European Solidarity Corps, Charlemagne Youth Prize, Euroscola, or the European Youth Event, with a notable 20-30% expressing uncertainty about these.

Beyond institutional recognition, understanding of key EU concepts remained limited. Approximately 80% of survey respondents had **little or no knowledge of how the presidents of the European Commission or Parliament are appointed**, with only 5% fully aware. While over 70% knew fundamental EU values such as liberty, equality, and democracy, and gender equality was very well understood (over 90%), understanding of the Charter of Fundamental Rights was held by only about half, and European democracy was moderately understood by about 60% as linked to citizen participation and democratic values. Awareness of EU policies and their impacts was also low, with over 70% indicating little or no knowledge of recent migration policies or education, culture, youth, and sport policies. Erasmus+ stood out as the best-known youth policy, recognised by nearly 80% of respondents.

Despite these knowledge gaps, there is a growing sense of European identity. Between 2019 and 2022, the proportion of young French people (aged 18–30) identifying as European citizens increased to 60%, even surpassing those identifying as global citizens (INJEP, 2019). Positive perceptions of the EU — associated with values such as solidarity, cooperation, and democracy — have also strengthened, while negative views tied to bureaucracy or decline have diminished (Hoibian & Müller, 2022). Higher education and income levels are strongly correlated with both more favorable perceptions and greater EU knowledge (Hoibian & Müller, 2022). Nonetheless, some young people remain disillusioned by the EU’s perceived complexity and its distance from local realities, feeding into latent Euroscepticism (Mercenier, 2019).

Desk research confirms this mixed level of awareness, noting that while most young French people are aware of the EU's existence, their understanding of the specific roles and concrete impact of key institutions like the European Parliament, European Commission, and the Council of the EU is limited. According to Eurobarometer 93, around 58% of young French people report a basic knowledge of EU institutions, but far fewer can explain their concrete impact on national policymaking. (European Commission, 2021).

Knowledge of major EU policies, such as the Green Deal or digital transformation, is often superficial, especially among youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, including migrant communities and lower socio-economic groups. Survey data further showed that 72% of young people answered correctly only one to four of nine EU-related questions in a 2022 survey (Hoibian & Müller, 2022).

Interviews and national roundtables consistently confirmed these **widespread gaps in young people's understanding of the EU**, especially among marginalized youth, who often lacked even basic knowledge of institutions and felt disconnected from policymaking. This reflects broader inequalities in civic education, mobility, and access to supportive environments.

4.1.2 Knowledge of Opportunities for Active Engagement of Young People

A **significant barrier to participation in EU programmes like Erasmus+** stems from the persistent misconception that these initiatives are only accessible to EU citizens, discouraging many potential applicants, particularly TCNs. Access to EU-related knowledge is also influenced by socio-economic background, with those from higher socio-economic groups benefiting from richer cultural environments, greater mobility opportunities, and more advanced civic education, thus having better access to institutional information. In contrast, young people from more marginalised backgrounds face greater challenges in accessing such knowledge, which can foster feelings of exclusion and weaken their interest in engaging with EU initiatives. While higher education and income levels are strongly correlated with more favourable perceptions and greater EU knowledge, information alone is often insufficient, with stakeholders emphasizing the critical role of **structured engagement opportunities and direct exposure** to foster meaningful awareness and participation, particularly for marginalized youth. Proactive outreach through trusted networks, such as grassroots initiatives and local associations, was highlighted as essential.

4.2 Participation

4.2.1 Voting, Parties and Representative Structures

Youth participation in civic and political life displays diverse patterns influenced by age, nationality, and personal interests. Although young people express stronger support for the EU compared to older generations, this does not consistently translate into conventional political engagement. For instance, in the 2014 European elections, turnout among 18–24-year-olds in France was significantly lower at just 27.8% compared to older age groups. However, this contrasts with **increasing involvement in non-conventional forms of engagement**, such as activism, volunteering, and participation in social movements, which many young people favour over formal political structures to achieve direct impact on issues important to them (Mercenier, 2019).

4.2.2 Advocacy and Non-Electoral Participation

ParticipACTION survey results indicated that approximately 65% of respondents reported engaging in political content on social media, while about 50% had taken part in protests or boycotts. **Nearly 40% had voted in local, national, or European elections**, and around 35% volunteered locally. In contrast, less than 20% had contacted representatives or run for public office, and about a quarter had never been engaged.

4.2.3 Motivations for Participation and Role of Community

The primary **motivations for engagement** were strongly linked to social justice, inequality, and solidarity, cited by over 70% of respondents. Around 60% mentioned personal values or the desire to help others, while political context and community belonging were mentioned by about 40%. Broader desk research also confirms that young people are often inspired by a desire to have an impact, personal experiences of injustice or discrimination, and a sense of social responsibility towards their communities. Initiatives such as the French *Service Civique* have been developed to encourage youth volunteering, which is widely recognized as an important pathway to civic and social engagement (European Commission, 2023).

Direct experience with EU programmes, such as Erasmus+ or the European Youth Event, plays a significant role in fostering participation, leading to greater awareness of EU opportunities and higher engagement levels, suggesting that firsthand exposure strengthens both their sense of belonging and willingness to contribute. These findings come from the online survey conducted between December 2024 and January 2025 as part of the ParticipACTION project. However, perceptions of online civic and political engagement opportunities were mixed among survey respondents, with 40% giving a neutral rating (3/5), 30% feeling opportunities were limited (1-2),

and 30% rating them sufficient (4-5). These results illustrate a diversity of views on how effectively the digital space enables youth participation.

4.2.4 Reasons Behind Low Participation

Significant disparities in political knowledge and participation exist among young people, influenced by socio-economic status, ethnicity, and migratory background. Young people from lower socio-economic classes and minority groups, particularly those of Arab, Berber, or African descent, are less likely to engage in civic activities, whether conventional or non-conventional, and are more likely to hold Eurosceptic views, often feeling excluded from the benefits of EU membership (LaRue Allen et al., 2016). Conversely, young people from higher-income households, those pursuing higher education, and those in employment tend to hold more positive views of the EU and engage more actively in civic life. Women, unemployed youth, and those with lower levels of education are more likely to adopt neutral or even negative perspectives on the EU.

Gender also shapes participation patterns. Young women tend to engage more in social movements and public debates than young men, whose engagement often declines in less supportive educational settings.

4.3 Barriers

Numerous barriers consistently limit young people's ability and willingness to engage with the EU in France, particularly among marginalized groups, here divided as following among tangible and intangible barriers.

4.3.1 Tangible Barriers

4.3.1.1 Legal and Systemic Barriers for Migrants

An additional significant barrier for TCNs relates to their **limited access to fundamental rights, such as voting and naturalisation**. Many young TCNs express frustration at being excluded from democratic processes due to their nationality, as they are ineligible to vote in national and European elections despite often being long-term residents. Eligibility for naturalisation in France requires at least five years of legal and continuous residence (reducible to two years under certain conditions like higher education), sufficient French language proficiency (minimum B1), integration into French society, a stable economic situation, and a clean criminal record.

4.3.1.2 Lack of Accessibility and Clarity of Information

A prominent challenge is the **lack of accessibility and clarity of information**, as EU institutions often communicate through bureaucratic language and complex terminology, making information difficult to find and understand, especially for those outside academic or policy circles. For many young people, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, information alone is insufficient if it remains inaccessible and unrelatable.

4.3.1.3 Economic Barriers

Administrative and material constraints further exacerbate these challenges. The complexity of procedures discourages participation, particularly for TCNs who often lack personal guidance to navigate institutional requirements. For many young people facing economic hardship, civic engagement is viewed as a "luxury" due to the need to work, limited financial compensation for participation, and a lack of support for travel and related expenses. The national roundtable reinforced these points, identifying structural barriers such as unequal access to information and opportunities that favour those from higher socio-economic backgrounds, alongside material constraints and a lack of confidence.

4.3.2 Intangible Barriers

4.3.2.1 Structural Discrimination

Experiences of **discrimination and exclusion** also deter engagement. Marginalized groups, including TCNs, women, and minority youth, face legal barriers, gender-based expectations, and, in some cases, racism, which can undermine their sense of belonging. Young women, in particular, in FGDs reported additional obstacles in accessing leadership spaces, while some minority youth express feeling "less European" due to discriminatory experiences.

4.3.2.2 Mistrust in Public Institutions and Psychological Barriers

These difficulties are compounded by a pervasive **mistrust in public institutions**, with many young people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, speaking of experiencing "administrative violence," which fosters cynicism and withdrawal rather than participation. The 2004 law banning religious symbols in schools also disproportionately affects young Muslim women, contributing to their exclusion.

Psychological barriers also play a significant role, as many young people feel a sense of disconnect from European institutions, perceiving them as distant, overly bureaucratic, and "not meant for them". This sentiment is particularly acute among young people with immigrant

backgrounds or those studying disciplines outside the social sciences, who often cite a lack of information, perceived institutional complexity, and a belief that their voices carry little influence as reasons for disengagement.

4.3.2.3 Knowledge, Identity and Civic Involvement

Finally, the **lack of diverse representation and relatable role models** within political and institutional spaces leaves many young people feeling unrepresented. The rise of sovereigntist and anti-EU rhetoric in political discourse further contributes to growing scepticism and negative attitudes towards the EU, discouraging youth engagement.

Migrant-origin women face compounded barriers due to both racial and gender-based discrimination, and cultural expectations often discourage their political involvement, exacerbated by a lack of visible female migrant leaders. Interviewees also specifically highlighted that young women often face gender-specific barriers to participation, underscoring the need for targeted and inclusive approaches. Furthermore, many young people, especially those from migrant backgrounds, during ParticipACTION FGDs reported feeling more included at the EU level than at the national level, citing experiences of discrimination in their host country as a barrier to national civic participation.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Several overarching themes emerged across the various data sources:

Education emerged as a critical factor shaping young people's civic knowledge, engagement, and participation. Strengthening civic education and embedding EU-related topics into school curricula were widely seen as necessary to equip youth with the understanding and confidence to engage meaningfully in democratic processes.

Social inequalities — including socio-economic disparities, discrimination, and racism — were consistently identified as major barriers to engagement. These structural inequalities not only limit access to opportunities but also reinforce feelings of exclusion. Addressing them is essential for fostering inclusive participation and ensuring all young people can contribute to civic life.

Trust in institutions was highlighted as another key influence on youth engagement. Many young people, particularly from marginalised groups, expressed scepticism toward institutions they perceived as opaque or unresponsive. Building trust through greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness was seen as fundamental to restoring confidence and encouraging participation.

The need for inclusive policies was underscored, particularly to reflect the realities of diverse youth. This includes addressing the specific needs of migrant-origin youth, girls and young women, and tackling harmful stereotypes. Ensuring that policies are responsive and representative of all groups helps to foster a sense of belonging and legitimacy.

Personal experiences also shaped young people's connection to the EU. Those who had been directly affected by EU opportunities or policies — whether positively or negatively — demonstrated greater understanding and engagement. Expanding access to first-hand EU experiences can help demystify institutions and build stronger links between young people and European decision-making.

The role of media was noted as both influential and problematic. While media is a primary source of political information for many, concerns about bias and limited perspectives were widespread. Strengthening media literacy and ensuring access to diverse, reliable information sources were seen as vital for informed engagement.

Finally, many participants, especially from immigrant backgrounds, expressed a sense of disconnect from EU politics, citing lack of representation, complexity, and limited influence. At the same time, a generational shift was observed, with more young people — particularly from diverse backgrounds — challenging traditional power structures and using digital activism as a tool. Those who felt heard and believed in their ability to make a difference were more hopeful and engaged, highlighting the importance of creating inclusive spaces and opportunities for meaningful participation.

5. Focus Areas and Solutions

5.1 Youth Proposals to foster solidarity and civic participation

Throughout the project activities, participants were given the opportunity to discuss potential solutions to their concerns and share ideas to better support young people in France, particularly TCN youth and young women.

The following recommendations are aimed at enhancing solidarity and civic engagement within the European context. emerged from discussions with young people held during the FGDs, seminar, and roundtable and are addressed to policymakers at EU and national levels, educators, and youth organizations:

- **Improve access to information** by making EU materials clearer, more relevant to young people's daily realities, and more decentralised in delivery. A recurrent theme is the need to improve education and access to information about the EU. They advocate integrating EU-related content into school curricula, delivered by well-trained teachers and focused on concrete, relatable issues expressed in accessible language. Improved communication about the EU's tangible impact on everyday life is seen as essential to increasing awareness and interest. The **potential of social media** as a communication tool was highlighted by the stakeholders, with platforms such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Telegram, TikTok, and Instagram identified as key channels to engage youth where they already are.
- **Ensure active inclusion**, providing material support such as travel funding and compensation, and proactively reaching marginalised groups. Recruitment in public institutions should also become more inclusive and transparent. Interactive and experiential learning opportunities were also emphasized, including internships, simulations, commemorative events, and the expansion of initiatives such as the European Youth Event (EYE) to more local contexts. Such initiatives, they argue, allow young people to experience EU action firsthand and foster a stronger sense of connection. Respondents stressed the importance of inclusive outreach strategies, particularly targeting young people from working-class backgrounds and those otherwise disengaged from EU matters. Peer-led, face-to-face initiatives were identified as effective means of building trust and engagement.
- **Strengthen mentorship ecosystems** by promoting long-term guidance and raising awareness among parents, teachers, and counsellors about youth opportunities.
- **Empower youth as co-creators of policy**, demystifying decision-making processes, and establishing formal mechanisms such as youth assemblies or parliamentary groups to allow direct contributions.

Youth involvement in decision-making emerged as another priority. Suggestions include establishing youth ambassadors, dedicated platforms or apps for young citizens, and formal roles enabling young people to contribute to EU initiatives and feel a sense of ownership. To make politics more approachable, young people proposed tools and resources to demystify political processes, helping them understand how decisions are made and how they can meaningfully participate. They also called for greater emphasis on European identity, shared values, and collective experiences to strengthen solidarity.

- **Recognise non-formal engagement**, ensuring that skills and experiences gained through volunteering and civic action are standardised and acknowledged in academic and professional contexts.
Finally, participants underscored the need to professionalise and value youth engagement by formally recognising the skills and contributions of young volunteers and activists, providing incentives for sustained participation, and improving representation of diverse socio-economic and minority backgrounds within EU institutions.
- **Guarantee rights protection**, closing implementation gaps in instruments such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and simplifying administrative processes for reporting violations.
- **Reform education policy**, removing structural biases in vocational tracking, fostering parental involvement, and integrating community associations into school governance. Cultural and sports initiatives should also be promoted as accessible pathways to inclusion and participation.
- **Foster youth leadership** by entrusting young people with meaningful responsibilities within organisations to build confidence and long-term engagement.

Among proposed solutions to increase youth engagement, nearly 80% of survey respondents recommended **strengthening civic education at all levels**. Around 75% supported enhancing social media campaigns, over 60% favoured funding local initiatives and cultural events, and about 55% requested more volunteering and awareness campaigns. Roughly 40% called for better protection of the right to protest. Interviewees advocated for efforts to demystify political institutions, improve transparency, and integrate EU-related awareness more systematically into schools and youth workshops, alongside funding and supporting grassroots organizations. National roundtables highlighted the potential of mentorship and peer-to-peer support, demystifying policymaking by showing how personal stories can shape policies, and recognizing lived experiences as legitimate expertise.

Proactive, targeted outreach through trusted networks, with flexible and accessible formats, along with delegating real responsibilities to young people and leveraging culture and sport as entry points, were also seen as vital to fostering inclusion and leadership. Stakeholders criticised current policies for failing to meaningfully include diverse youth and recommended a shift toward more inclusive, accessible, and youth-driven approaches that value non-formal experiences, simplify

participation processes, integrate grassroots actors, provide material support, and strengthen diversity and representation in public life.

Moreover, specific policy areas identified for improvement and desired reforms to existing mechanisms include:

- **Pact on Asylum and Migration:** Reorient the pact to prioritise human rights and individual narratives, with special attention to minors, integration, and equitable responsibility-sharing among Member States.
- **Charter of Fundamental Rights:** Ensure uniform implementation across Member States, simplify complaint procedures, and provide material support to enable individuals to claim their rights.
- **European Solidarity Corps (ESC):** Simplify administrative procedures, improve compensation, and ensure standard recognition of acquired skills to enhance accessibility and impact.
- **National Education Policy (France):** Reform guidance practices to remove rigid vocational tracking, engage parents through dedicated structures, and include local associations in school governance to combat disaffection.
- **Youth Inclusion Policies:** Move beyond symbolic initiatives by proactively engaging young people as policy co-creators, funding long-term mentorship and peer-led programmes, and making political processes transparent and relatable.

6. Conclusion

This report offers a comprehensive overview of youth civic engagement in France, highlighting the complex interplay of individual, educational, and systemic factors. A notable finding is the **growing sense of European citizenship** among young people, although significant knowledge gaps regarding EU institutions persist, particularly among marginalised youth. Engagement levels vary, with a preference for local initiatives due to a more tangible sense of belonging, while the EU is often perceived as distant and bureaucratic.

The study underscores that simply providing information is insufficient; **direct exposure, peer-to-peer learning, and structured, contextualised engagement are essential**. Major barriers include administrative complexity, misconceptions (e.g., Erasmus+ eligibility), and profound **psychological barriers preventing youth from perceiving themselves as legitimate participants in EU spaces**. Social inequalities, discrimination, and economic insecurity further disproportionately limit participation among vulnerable groups. Trust in institutions is a critical factor, and disparities linked to socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity remain pervasive.

Addressing these challenges calls for a **comprehensive strategy combining education, inclusion, and empowerment**. Civic education should make EU topics tangible and accessible, while outreach must be proactive, inclusive, and rooted in trusted networks. Institutions should be demystified through simplified communication and direct youth involvement. Tackling social and economic barriers, fostering diverse representation, promoting mentorship, and formally recognising non-formal engagement are all essential to building trust, equity, and meaningful participation among young people.

By addressing these challenges comprehensively, policymakers and educators can create an environment where all young people feel empowered to contribute to civic and political life, fostering a more democratic and inclusive society.

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Annex 1: Desk Research Questions

1. Knowledge

- What are the documented levels of awareness among the target audience regarding EU institutions, policies, legislation, and strategies?
- Are there any documented gaps in young persons' knowledge of national and EU processes?
 - Are the gaps in knowledge cross-cutting, or is there any documented relationship that emerges between specific identities (i.e., gender, socio-economic background, migratory background...) and levels of awareness and knowledge (or lack thereof) of political, civic, and solidarity mechanisms at the national and/or EU levels?
- What is the current climate regarding Euroscepticism, particularly among young people?

2. Participation

- What is the level of youth political and civic participation in the country? Does this level vary between national processes and EU processes? Consider activities such as voting, candidacy, holding office, campaigning, political membership, protests, boycotts, and involvement in policymaking.
- Are there any national policy documents and action plans related to youth democratic participation and political engagement? Include specific records related to the involvement of young TCNs and women and girls.
- Identify any national bodies that focus on youth democratic participation.

3. Barriers

- Are any laws, regulations, or policies supporting or hindering TCNs' participation in civic democratic life?
- Identify practical (non-legal) barriers, such as racism, xenophobia, racial profiling, gendered expectations, and socio-economic obstacles. Are there any stereotypes correlated with political and civic participation (or lack thereof)?
- Are any groups particularly discouraged from engaging in public life due to stereotypes and expectations (i.e., gendered expectations of “calm/nurturing” rather than assertive behavior for women, migrants and stereotypes of being “unqualified” or “uncooperative”, young people and the stereotype of “political apathy”)?

Annex 2: Survey Questions

Demographic Questions:

- **Age:**
 - 16
 - 17
 - 18
 - 19
 - 20
 - 21
 - 22
 - 23

- **What gender do you identify as?**
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary
 - Other: _____
 - Prefer not to say

- **What is your country of residence (i.e., in what country do you live?)**

- **What is your country of origin?**

- 1. **Which of the following institutions, opportunities, and policies are you familiar with? By familiar, we mean you believe you could somewhat confidently describe their role, duties, or content in the EU. (Multiple Selection Possible)**
 - European Commission
 - European Parliament
 - European Youth Strategy 2019-2027/European Youth Goals

- Erasmus +
- European Solidarity Corps
- Council of Europe
- Court of Justice of the European Union
- European Court of Human Rights
- None of these/Unsure

2. Below are some ways people can get involved in the work of the European Union. Which, if any, have you heard of? (Multiple Selection Possible)

- Petitions to the European Parliament
- Opportunities to visit the European Parliament
- Events organised by the European Parliament Liaison Office
- Contacting an MEP about an issue
- The European Youth Event (EYE)/EYE Online
- Events or online activities organized by together.eu
- The Charlemagne Youth Prize
- Euroscola
- None of these/Unsure

3. Do you know how the president of the European Commission or the European Parliament is appointed?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

4. Are you aware of the six core values of the European Union?

- Yes
- No
- Some of them

4.1 If you chose “Yes” or ‘Some of them”, can you try to name (some of) them?

5. Are you aware of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

5.1 If you chose “Yes” or “Somewhat”, can you try to briefly talk about what it is/what it is about?

6. What is your understanding of the term “Gender Equality”?

7. What is your understanding of the term “European Democracy”?

8. Are you familiar with recent developments, policies, plans or decisions of the EU related to migration? What impact do these have in your national/local context?

8.1 Are you familiar with developments, policies, and plans, of the EU related to promoting Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports? What impact do these have in your national/local context?

9. In what ways do you think the EU or your State could promote civic and political participation of young people (EU citizens and third-country nationals) at the local, national, and European levels?

- Broadening electoral eligibility
- Provide greater protection for the right to protest
- Increase civic education opportunities across all educational levels
- Stronger social media campaigns
- Finance local engagement activities

- Cultural events and festivals
- Other: _____

For the European Union, solidarity is a fundamental principle based on sharing the advantages, i.e., prosperity, and the burdens equally and justly among members ([Eurofund, 2011](#)).

10. In what ways do you believe your country or the EU could support you in expressing more acts of solidarity towards those most vulnerable in your daily life?

- More volunteering opportunities
- Awareness campaigns
- Funding for local initiatives
- More discussion of solidarity and participation opportunities in schools and public spaces
- Other: _____

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, do you think there are enough online opportunities to participate and engage in civic and political action in the EU?

- 1 - No, there are not enough
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Yes, there are enough
- I don't know

12. Select all of the activities in which you have taken part in the last year (12 months):

(Multiple Selection Possible)

- Volunteered Abroad/In EU projects
- Volunteered at a local organization

- Participated in a Protest or Boycott
- Reached out to a representative (email, phone call...)
- Ran for office
- Took part in a political campaign
- Used social media to post/share/create content about a political issue you cared about
- Voted in the last local, national, or European election
- None of them/Unsure

Other

13. If you ever have, who or what has inspired you to get civically or politically involved in your community or express solidarity with others?