

Engage our youth to shape Europe's future



Political participation in our modern democracies helps ensure that policies and measures necessary to implement human rights commitments enjoy the support of society.

But findings of [FRA's recent Fundamental Rights Survey](#) signal a lack of political participation among young people.

They consistently attach a lower level of importance than older age groups to traditional forms of politics.

For example, under 60% of young people aged 16-29 consider freedom of opposition parties to criticise the government of high importance compared with about 70% of people aged 54 or older.

As one young German woman told FRA: "Everybody always says that we can't change anything anyways, but it is at least a small start to go to vote, I mean how many youths don't go to vote at all anymore. And then they ultimately get upset about the ones who are still there."

Such sentiment underlines the need to promote the full participation of young

people in political, social and economic life. This is vital for a pluralistic, democratic and fundamental rights-based future of our societies.

The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the framework for EU youth policy cooperation, already acknowledges this. It seeks to foster the participation of young people in democratic life while also supporting their social and civic engagement.

One way to do this is to [harmonising across the EU the minimum age](#) to vote or stand as a candidate in elections, or to take part in youth councils – aligned with the principles set out in the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights concerning citizens' rights (Articles 39 and 40). Currently, for example, only three Member States give 16 or 17-year-olds the right to vote in any election.

The youth-led #FridaysForFuture movement against climate change also offers hope.

The EU and its Member States should build on such initiatives taking note of how political engagement among young is evolving.

Europe needs new ways of engaging, involving and communicating effectively with its youth. International Youth Day is a good place to start.