

LCQ10: Providing opportunities for policy discussion for young people

Following is a question by the Hon Chung Kwok-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (March 17):

Question:

The Government launched in 2017 the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth (MSSY) to provide opportunities for young people for policy discussion and enable them to understand government operation. Under MSSY, persons aged between 18 and 35 may self-nominate to become members of 10 specified advisory and statutory bodies. The Government has implemented three phases of MSSY so far, and will raise the number of participating bodies to 15 starting from Phase IV. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) regarding each phase of MSSY, (i) the number of applicants, (ii) the percentage of applicants appointed, (iii) the profile of the appointees, such as their age distribution and qualifications, and (iv) the details relating to the appointees' participation in the work of the relevant bodies (including the number of meetings attended, and the number of cases in which their views were adopted and implemented);

(2) as the findings of a survey conducted in the middle of last year showed that 73 per cent of the 524 young respondents aged between 18 and 35 had indicated that they would not consider making applications under MSSY, and the reasons cited included: they perceived themselves to be lacking the qualifications, had no interest in the specified bodies, and did not believe that such bodies could exert influence, what measures the Government has put in place to incentivise young people to apply for participating in MSSY;

(3) whether the Government will include more advisory and statutory bodies of different policy areas in MSSY and elevate the role and positioning of the young people appointed under MSSY in the relevant bodies, so as to enable them to serve their full functions and recruit more young people of different backgrounds to participate in MSSY; and

(4) whether the Government will introduce other policy initiatives to attract young people to participate in public affairs and policy discussions, thereby contributing to society; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Government's reply to the Hon Chung Kwok-pan's question is as follows:

(1) In October 2017, the Government launched the Pilot Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth (Pilot Scheme) whereby five government advisory committees were identified for recruiting self-recommended young members aged between 18 and 35 to fill 11 seats. Having regard to the positive feedback, we have regularised the Scheme. The first three phases of the regularised Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth (MSSY) covered 30 committees with 60 seats offered in total. Over 5 300 applications have been received since the launch of the Pilot Scheme. The numbers of applications received in various phases are tabulated below:

	Pilot Scheme	MSSY Phase I	MSSY Phase II	MSSY Phase III
No. of committees	5	10	10	10
No. of seats offered	11	20	20	20
No. of eligible applications (No. of ineligible applications*)	1 121 (58)	1 511 (19)	1 409 (19)	1 266 (16)

*Examples are applicants falling outside the specified age range (i.e. 18 to 35), applications without contact information, and duplicated applications (only one of the duplicated applications will be processed).

Young people appointed directly through MSSY are aged between 18 and 35, with an average of around 28. Most of them are bachelor's degree holders from various sectors, including social welfare, education, medical care, legal, finance, engineering, aviation and information technology while some are university undergraduates and master's or doctor's degree holders.

In addition to the seats open for recruitment under MSSY, the Government has invited applicants attending interviews to authorise the Home Affairs Bureau to include their personal particulars in the Central Personality Index database so that relevant bureaux/departments may retrieve the information for reference during selection of candidates for appointment as members to other advisory and statutory bodies under their purview. So far, around 400 posts are currently held by young people who have been appointed to advisory and statutory bodies directly or indirectly through MSSY.

We do not keep statistics on meeting attendance of youth members who have joined government advisory committees through MSSY. However, according to the relevant committee secretariats, young members have been actively participating in their committees' work and activities since appointment. From our observation, many applicants were indeed very well prepared for the interviews and could suggest innovative and practical ideas on policy areas of their interest.

(2) and (3) To attract more young people who are passionate about serving the community to apply for MSSY, we have been offering seats of committees on policy areas of greater interests and concerns to them in each phase for

self-recommended participation. A list of participating committees under the Pilot Scheme and previous phases of MSSY is at Annex.

In the upcoming MSSY Phase IV, we will increase the number of participating committees from 10 to 15, covering a wider spectrum of policy areas including conservation, innovation and technology, education, environmental protection, business and transportation. Two seats will be offered for appointment in each committee.

We have also released promotional videos, including videos to introduce the work of former appointed youth members in their committees, so as to enhance understanding of young people on MSSY and government committees. Looking ahead, we will step up publicity of MSSY Phase IV by producing a series of new promotional videos and materials of greater appeal to young people, and widen our publicity channels.

(4) To provide more opportunities for young people to participate in policy discussion and debate, the Government has set a target of increasing the overall ratio of youth members aged between 18 and 35 to 15 per cent within its current term. Apart from reaching out through MSSY to young people who have strong commitment to serve the community, various bureaux and departments are recruiting young people to join advisory and statutory bodies under their purview by other means as well. The overall ratio of youth members in these bodies has increased from 7.8 per cent in 2017 to 13.7 per cent at present, gradually reaching the target of 15 per cent set by the current-term Government. The Government will continue to create an environment conducive to youth participation in public affairs, enabling them to advise the Government on different policy areas with their creativity and innovation.