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YouthProAktiv

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Channels of participation and engagement with the European representatives



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CONTENT

1. Introduction

1.1 Who this guide is for

1.2 Objective

1.3 Using this guide

2. Youth Engagement and Participation

2.1 Defining Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP)

2.2 The Participation Ladder

2.3 Youth Participation at the EU Level

3. The European Parliament's Position on Youth Participation

3.1 Our European Representatives: The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

4. Channels of Participation and Engagement with MEPs

4.1 Onsite Channels

4.1.1 The European Youth Event (EYE)

4.1.2 Local EYEs

4.1.3 Role Play Game

4.1.4 The Ambassador Schools Programme

4.2 Online Channels

4.2.1 Online Youth Talks with an Invited MEP

4.2.2 Youth Ideas Platform

4.2.3 Together.eu

4.2.4 The Citizens' App

4.2.5 European Parliament Social Media Channels

4.3 Other Channels of Participation and Engagement

4.3.1 Euroscola

4.3.2 The European Charlemagne Youth Prize

4.3.3 Youth Seminars

4.3.4 Petitions to the European Parliament

5. Tips and Recommendations for Engaging and Communicating with EU Representatives.

5.1 General Tips for Engaging with EU Representatives

5.2 Tips for Youth

5.3 Tips for Youth Workers

6. Conclusions

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Who this guide is for:

YouthProAktiv is committed to empowering young people across the European Union by fostering a culture of proactive engagement and participation in democratic processes. Recognizing the importance of youth involvement in shaping the future of Europe, this guide is designed to provide young people and youth workers with the tools and knowledge needed to engage effectively with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

It is also valuable for youth organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, as well as professionals working with young people. The guide aims to equip these groups with the tools and knowledge needed to actively participate in the legislative process, advocate for youth interests, and effectively communicate with European representatives.

By equipping the next generation with practical strategies for advocacy and participation, YouthProAktiv aims to ensure that youth voices are integral to the legislative process and that young people can actively contribute to the development of policies that impact their lives.



1.2 Objective:

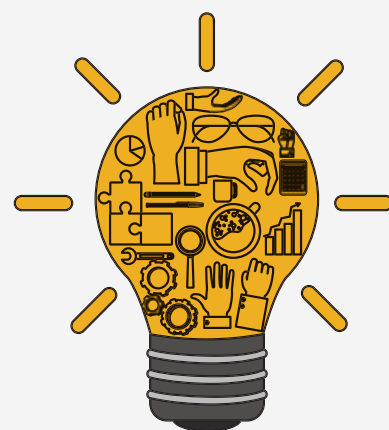
The primary objective of this guide is to provide a comprehensive overview of the various ways to engage with MEPs. It aims to empower young people and youth workers by offering practical strategies for interacting with MEPs, ensuring their voices are heard in the European legislative process.

The guide emphasizes the importance of youth participation in shaping legislation and provides actionable insights on how to build productive relationships with policymakers, making sure that youth perspectives are included in policy development and advocacy efforts.

1.3 Using this guide:

This guide serves as a comprehensive resource designed to help youth and youth workers navigate the various channels available for engaging with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). It outlines a range of methods and tools to facilitate effective and meaningful interactions with your representatives.

Throughout the guide, you will find key questions to consider at each stage of the engagement process, ensuring that your participation is thoughtful, strategic, and impactful.



THE GUIDE IS ORGANIZED INTO THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

1

Engagement and participation: This section introduces the concept of Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) and explains the Participation Ladder, which helps to understand different levels of youth involvement.

2

The European Parliament's position on youth participation: Here, you will explore the European Parliament's approach to youth engagement and gain insights into the roles and responsibilities of MEPs.

3

Channels of participation and engagement with MEPs: This core section provides a detailed overview of the various ways to engage with MEPs, categorized into onsite channels (such as face-to-face meetings), online channels (like social media and digital platforms), and other innovative methods of communication.

4

Tips and recommendations: The guide concludes with practical advice and strategies to ensure that your communication with EU representatives is both effective and constructive.

Whether your aim is to influence policy, advocate for change, or deepen your understanding of the legislative process, this guide will equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to make the most of the opportunities for youth engagement at the European Parliament level.

2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION:

Youth engagement and participation are essential to ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and considered in the decision-making processes that shape their futures. At the European Union (EU) level, these principles are deeply embedded in policy frameworks that aim to empower young people to take an active role in society. This section explores the theoretical foundations of Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) and examines how these concepts are integrated into the EU's approach to youth policy.

2.1 Defining Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP)

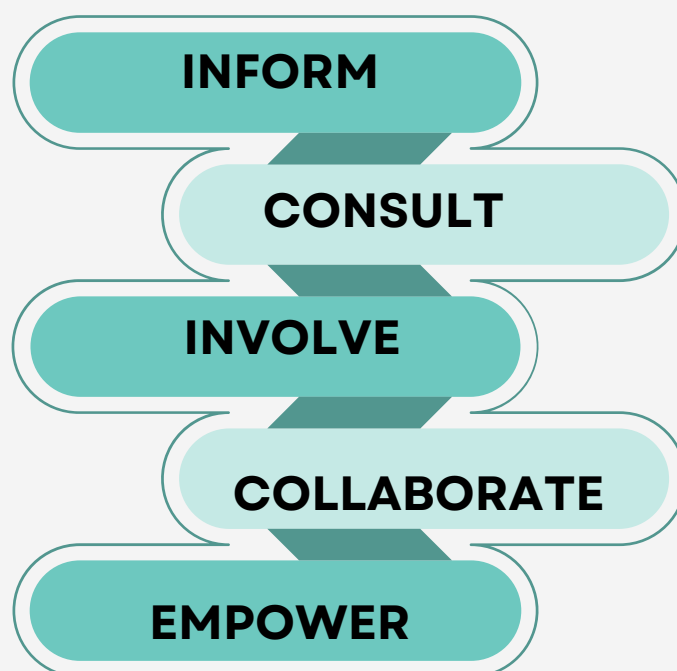
Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) refers to the active and intentional involvement of young people in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives. MYP ensures that young people's voices are not only heard but also acted upon in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs.



This approach goes beyond mere consultation; it involves collaborating with young people as leaders, partners, and beneficiaries, thereby recognizing their potential to contribute significantly to societal development. A critical aspect of MYP is ensuring that young people are well-informed, which enables them to participate effectively and make meaningful contributions.

2.2 The participation ladder

The Participation Ladder is a framework that illustrates the different levels of youth involvement in decision-making. At the most basic level, “Informing” involves providing young people with information, without seeking their input. As we move up the ladder, “Consulting” and “Involving” represent increasing levels of youth engagement, where their opinions are sought and considered. The highest levels, “Collaborating” and “Empowering”, signify full participation, where young people have a decisive role in shaping outcomes. This progression from minimal engagement to full empowerment highlights the importance of providing young people with opportunities to influence decisions that affect them.



2.3 Youth participation at the EU Level

Youth participation is a cornerstone of the EU's approach to fostering an inclusive and democratic society. The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, built around the pillars of Engage, Empower, and Connect, underscores the importance of involving young people in democratic processes. This strategy emphasizes that youth participation is not just about having a voice but about ensuring that young people from all backgrounds can contribute meaningfully to the development and implementation of EU policies.

The European Youth Goals, an integral part of this strategy, were developed through extensive dialogue with young people across Europe. These goals identify key areas that impact youth, such as education, employment, and social inclusion, and set targets to enhance youth participation in these areas. For example, Youth Goal #1, “Connecting EU with Youth”, aims to strengthen the relationship between young people and the EU, ensuring that their voices are integral to decision-making processes. Similarly, Youth Goal #9, “Space and Participation for All”, focuses on increasing youth involvement in all levels of decision-making, recognizing the critical role that young people play in sustaining democratic values.

By embedding these principles into its policy frameworks, the EU not only promotes youth participation but also works to ensure that young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to actively engage in shaping their future.



3. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S POSITION ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The European Parliament plays a vital role in the democratic framework of the European Union (EU), acting as the only directly elected body within the EU. It represents over 500 million EU citizens and shares legislative and budgetary powers with the Council of the European Union.

Additionally, the Parliament is instrumental in electing the President of the European Commission. As a unique institution that embodies active democracy on a multinational and multilingual scale, the European Parliament is where elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) engage in public debates and exert significant influence on EU policies.

Youth participation has been a consistent focus for the European Parliament, recognizing that young Europeans are crucial not only for the future of the EU but also as active contributors to its present. The Parliament has long advocated for initiatives that actively involve youth in shaping the European project.

For instance, during the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Parliament highlighted the essential role that young people must play in determining the EU's direction. While the proposal to establish dedicated youth forums, known as “agoras”, was only partially realized, the Parliament ensured that a substantial portion of the Conference's citizen panels included young people aged 16 to 25.



3. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S POSITION ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In September 2023, the Parliament reiterated its commitment to youth engagement through a Resolution on Parliamentarism, European citizenship, and democracy. This resolution emphasized the necessity of youth participation in the EU's democratic processes and proposed the creation of a "European Agora," a structured platform for discussing EU priorities and contributing to the European Commission's annual work program. Additionally, the resolution called for the establishment of a "European Youth Assembly", aimed at monitoring the application of a "Youth Check" throughout the legislative process in the EU.

Following the recent European elections in June 2024, the importance of youth participation remains critical. The current European Parliament will play a key role in addressing issues that are highly relevant to young people, such as health, environmental protection, education, and employment. It is therefore crucial for young citizens to remain engaged in the democratic process, ensuring that their voices continue to be heard and their interests represented in the EU's decision-making body.



3.1 Our European Representatives: The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected by the citizens of the European Union to represent their interests at the EU level. MEPs are central figures in the legislative process, holding the European Commission and Member States accountable while shaping and amending EU policies on significant issues such as climate change, migration, human rights, and financial regulation.

The work of an MEP is multifaceted, involving a delicate balance between serving their constituents, participating in political group discussions, and contributing to negotiations and votes in committees and plenary sessions. As key lawmakers, MEPs are responsible for navigating complex issues, requiring a deep understanding and the ability to synthesize information effectively.

MEPs are accessible to the public and can be approached to bring attention to specific issues within the Parliament, its committees, or intergroups. Unlike many national parliaments, the European Parliament does not operate under a majority party system, fostering a culture of consensus-building. This collaborative environment allows MEPs to work across political lines, making them valuable partners for advancing the concerns and interests of young people and youth workers.

By engaging with MEPs, young citizens and youth organizations can directly influence the legislative process within the EU, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed at the highest levels of European governance.



4. CHANNELS OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MEPS

Youth participation is a cornerstone of the European Parliament's efforts to engage the next generation in the democratic process. Recognizing the importance of empowering young people, the European Parliament offers a variety of initiatives, campaigns, and resources designed to increase youth involvement, not just during elections but as a continuous process. These channels provide young people with the tools and opportunities to directly engage with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and play an active role in shaping EU policies.

Before exploring these specific channels, it's essential to understand key elements in the daily work of MEPs, particularly those involved in the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). As will be addressed in the following pages, this committee plays a pivotal role in addressing issues that directly impact youth and youth workers, making it a critical area for youth engagement.



Committee on Culture and Education

Latest news

[Next CULT Committee meeting - 3 October 2024](#)
05-09-2024 - 17:33



CULT Activity Report 2019-2024
[View the Activity Report](#)

Fact Sheets on the EU
The Fact Sheets provide an overview of European integration and of the European Parliament's contribution to that process.
[Visit the website](#)

Contacting MEPs directly

The European Parliament [website](#) offers a comprehensive directory of MEPs, organized by country and political group, allowing for easy navigation and contact. Users can perform advanced searches by country, political group, or specific political bodies, such as committees and delegations. Once an MEP is selected, their profile provides detailed information, including email addresses, office phone numbers in Brussels and Strasbourg, the names of their Accredited Parliamentary Assistants (APAs), and their parliamentary activities. This includes their contributions to plenary debates, reports, motions for resolutions, and more. This directory is a valuable tool for youth and youth workers to directly engage with their representatives.

The role of the Accredited Parliamentary Assistants (APAs)

Accredited Parliamentary Assistants (APAs) are crucial players in the work of MEPs. They are employed under direct contracts with the European Parliament and work closely with MEPs in Brussels, Strasbourg, or Luxembourg. APAs assist MEPs in their daily tasks, from managing correspondence to preparing for parliamentary debates. Their role is essential when reaching out to MEPs, as they are often the first point of contact. Information about APAs is accessible through the MEPs' profiles on the European Parliament website.



The image shows a screenshot of the European Parliament website. At the top, the European Parliament logo and name are displayed. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for News, Topics, MEPs, About Parliament, Plenary, Committees, Delegations, Elections, and Other websites. A search icon and language selector (EN) are also visible. The main content area features a large banner with a play button icon and the text "Watch the committees live". Below this is a section titled "Stay informed" with a brief description: "Stay updated on what Parliament is doing. Check out the latest news, watch our meetings live and follow MEPs on social media." At the bottom, there are four small images: a document with text in multiple languages, a calendar showing dates 12, 13, 19, and 20, two men in suits shaking hands, and a camera on a tripod in a large hall.

The Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)

The CULT Committee is responsible for areas that significantly impact youth, including education, cultural policy, youth policy, and sports. Although youth policy remains largely a national competence, the EU plays a supportive role, with CULT advocating for stronger youth policies. Initiatives like the European Solidarity Corps and DiscoverEU are examples of CULT's efforts to strengthen youth engagement. The committee also spearheaded the European Year of Youth (EYY) in 2022, emphasizing the importance of youth in shaping a greener, more inclusive, and digital future. As the European Parliament's hub for youth issues, CULT continues to engage with young people and bring them closer to EU decision-making processes.

4.1 Onsite channels

4.1.1 The European Youth Event (EYE)

The European Youth Event (EYE) is a biennial gathering that brings together thousands of young people from across Europe to discuss and shape ideas for the EU's future. Held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, EYE is a unique opportunity for 16- to 30-year-olds to interact with experts, activists, influencers, and decision-makers. The event includes discussions on a wide range of topics relevant to the EU's future, culminating in the European Youth Hearing, where participants present their top-voted ideas to MEPs and other leaders.



European Youth Event
European Parliament

[EYE](#) [Local EYEs](#) [Previous Editions](#) [Beyond EYE](#) [Comms kit](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [About Us](#)



EYE promotes equality, inclusiveness, and sustainability, with a strong commitment to accessibility. The event is designed to accommodate the needs of all participants and strives to be environmentally friendly. The most popular ideas from the event are further developed by EYEdea Boosters, volunteers who work closely with the Youth Outreach Unit and relevant stakeholders. These ideas are then presented to MEPs, contributing directly to the legislative process.

4.1.2 Local EYEs

Local EYEs are regional editions of the European Youth Event, held every two years in various European cities. These events bring the spirit of the central EYE closer to young people across Europe, providing opportunities for 16- to 30-year-olds to connect, discuss, and exchange ideas on Europe's future with experts and decision-makers. Co-founded and supported by the European Parliament, Local EYEs are organized by local youth organizations, ensuring that they address regional interests while fostering a connection to broader European issues.

In 2024, Local EYEs took place in cities like Berlin, Vilnius, Forli, and Brežice, empowering young people to become active citizens and enhancing their engagement with the European Parliament.

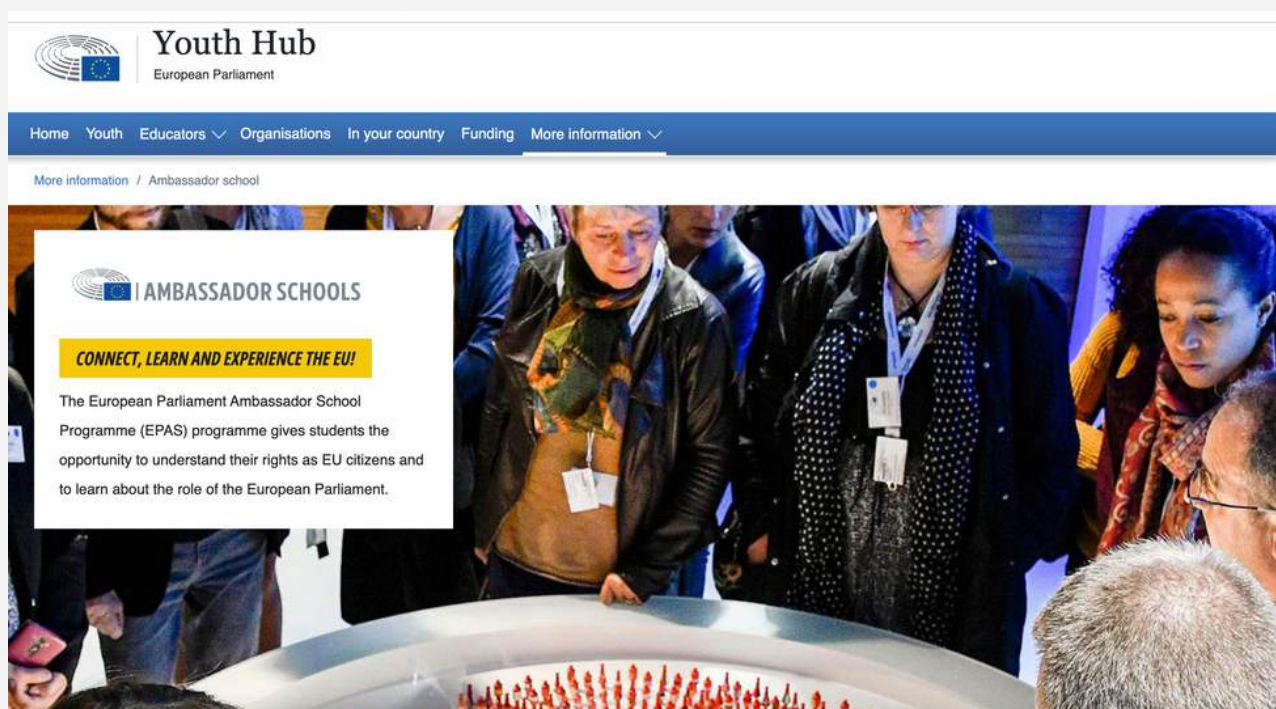
4.1.3 Role Play Game

The Role Play Game is an interactive experience that allows participants to step into the shoes of an MEP and understand the legislative process of the European Union. Available in several European cities, this game divides players into imaginary political groups, challenging them to negotiate, form alliances, and reach consensus on legislative issues. The game lasts 2 to 3 hours and is ideal for groups of 16 to 32 people aged 14 and older. It is a practical and engaging way for young people to learn how EU legislation is created and how European democracy functions.

4.1.4 The Ambassador Schools Programme

The European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) is designed to increase students' awareness of European parliamentary democracy and European values. Present in over 1,500 high schools across the EU, the program encourages students to actively participate in EU democratic processes. Teachers and students are designated as Senior and Junior Ambassadors, respectively, and are responsible for implementing the program in their schools.

Activities include setting up EU Info Points, organizing Europe Day events, and creating social media content. Schools that successfully complete the program are certified as Ambassador Schools, with participants receiving certificates and opportunities to engage further with the European Parliament.



4.2 Online channels

4.2.1 Online Youth Talks with an invited MEP

Online Youth Talks offer groups of young people aged 16 to 26 the chance to learn about the European Parliament's role, structure, and impact through a 60-minute online presentation and Q&A session. These sessions are tailored to the group's interests and can include a virtual meeting with an MEP. Available in all 24 official EU languages, Online Youth Talks provide an accessible way for young people to engage with European democracy from anywhere.

4.2.2 Youth Ideas Platform

youthideas.eu is an online platform where young people can share their ideas for addressing Europe's current and future challenges. Users can publish ideas, engage in discussions, and contribute to shaping these ideas further. The platform serves as a source of inspiration for youth initiatives within the European Parliament, with the most concrete ideas being forwarded to MEPs and other policymakers.

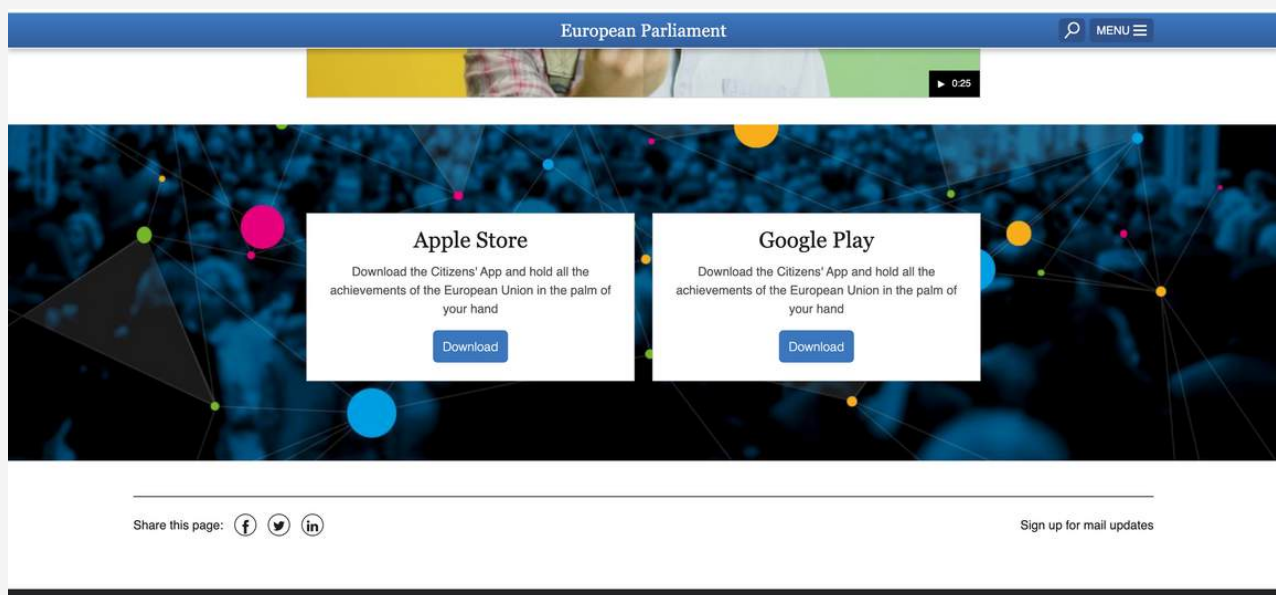
4.2.3 Together.eu

together.eu is an online platform designed to connect people who believe in democracy and want to make a difference as the next European elections approach. The platform encourages users to share ideas, participate in debates and events, complete e-learning modules, and stay informed about youth opportunities. It's a space for young people to engage in the democratic process and deepen their connection to European issues.



4.2.4 The Citizens' App

The Citizens' App is a mobile application that allows users to explore how the EU works and its impact on daily life. Available in 24 languages, the app provides information on topics of interest, updates on EU initiatives, and multimedia content such as videos and podcasts. It's a valuable tool for staying informed about EU activities and understanding the relevance of European citizenship.



4.2.5 European Parliament Social Media Channels

The European Parliament maintains a strong presence on various social media platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Spotify, and Reddit. These channels offer updates on parliamentary activities, livestreams of debates, interviews with MEPs, and interactive content. Engaging with these platforms allows young people to stay connected with EU affairs and participate in discussions about European democracy.

4.3 Other channels of participation and engagement

4.3.1 Euroscola

Euroscola is a program that allows high school students from across the EU to experience what it's like to be an MEP for a day. Held in the European Parliament's chambers in Strasbourg, participants debate, vote, and pass resolutions on real European issues, gaining a practical understanding of EU politics. The program is open to secondary schools in EU Member States and is a unique educational experience that encourages youth engagement in European democracy.

4.3.2 The European Charlemagne Youth Prize

The European Charlemagne Youth Prize is an annual award that recognizes youth-run projects promoting European and international understanding. Jointly awarded by the European Parliament and the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, the prize celebrates young people's contributions to European democracy and offers monetary rewards to the top projects. The prize encourages young Europeans to actively participate in shaping the future of Europe.



4.3.3 Youth Seminars

Youth Seminars offer a unique opportunity for groups of young people to engage in discussions on key European issues, such as climate change or education, and present their ideas to an MEP. These seminars take place in Brussels, Strasbourg, or online, and are designed to encourage critical thinking and participation in the democratic process. Participants work together to overcome cultural and linguistic differences, just as MEPs do, to reach common solutions.

4.3.4 Petitions to the European Parliament

The right to petition the European Parliament is a fundamental tool of participatory democracy, allowing EU citizens and residents to address issues that fall within the EU's areas of competence. Petitions can be submitted individually or collectively, and they give the European Parliament the opportunity to call attention to issues affecting citizens. The petitions process is overseen by the Parliament's Committee on Petitions, ensuring transparency and responsiveness to the concerns of the public.



5. TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING WITH EU REPRESENTATIVES

Engaging with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and other EU representatives is a powerful way to influence policies that affect your community, country, and the broader European Union.

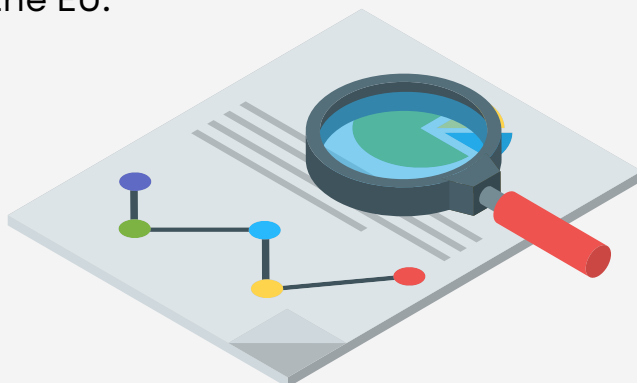
Whether you are a young person eager to make your voice heard or a youth worker supporting others in their advocacy efforts, effective communication and strategic planning are key. Below, we outline general tips that apply to both youth and youth workers, followed by specific advice tailored to each group.

5.1 General tips for engaging with EU Representatives:

Successfully engaging with EU representatives requires more than just passion and a good idea. It involves thorough preparation, clear communication, and a strategic approach. These tips will help you navigate the process, ensuring that your efforts are impactful and that your voice is heard by those who have the power to make a difference.

A. Understand the policy environment:

Before reaching out to MEPs or other EU representatives, take the time to thoroughly research the policy landscape. This involves identifying who the key players are in the areas you are interested in, understanding their priorities, and familiarizing yourself with the current issues and debates within the EU.



Knowing the context in which you are operating will help you tailor your message to be more relevant and compelling. For instance, if you know that an MEP is particularly interested in environmental policy, you can frame your concerns in a way that aligns with their existing work and interests.

B. Plan your approach:

Effective engagement starts with a clear and strategic plan. Begin by defining your key message—what is the main point you want to communicate? Next, set specific, measurable objectives for what you want to achieve with each interaction. Are you trying to influence a specific policy decision, raise awareness about an issue, or build a long-term relationship with a policymaker?

Once you have your goals in mind, tailor your approach to the interests and motivations of your audience. For example, if you are meeting with an MEP who is focused on education, highlight how your issue impacts students and learning environments.

5.2 Tips for youth

As a young person, engaging with EU representatives can be both empowering and challenging. Whether you're advocating for a specific cause or simply learning more about how the EU works, these tips will help you navigate the process and make your voice heard.



A. Start early:

It's important to get involved in the policy-making process as early as possible. Engaging with MEPs and other stakeholders at the beginning of the process allows you to influence the conversation before decisions are made. This early involvement not only positions you as a proactive and informed advocate but also helps you build credibility over time. For example, if you start engaging with an MEP when they are first considering a new policy, you can provide input that shapes the final outcome, rather than trying to make changes after the fact.

B. Build relationships:

Don't be afraid to reach out to MEPs, their assistants, and other relevant stakeholders. Introduce yourself, share your ideas, and ask thoughtful questions. Building these connections early can open doors for future opportunities and make it easier for you to advocate for your cause. Relationships are key in the world of policymaking; the more familiar MEPs are with you and your work, the more likely they are to listen to your input.

Consider attending events, participating in discussions, or even sending regular updates to maintain these connections over time.



C. Leverage social media:

Social media is a powerful tool for young people to engage with MEPs and raise awareness about issues. Platforms like X, Instagram, and Reddit allow you to participate in real-time conversations, share your perspectives, and connect with others who care about the same issues. Use these platforms to amplify your voice, create online campaigns, and engage directly with MEPs who are active on social media. For example, you might start a hashtag campaign to draw attention to a specific issue and encourage others to join in, tagging relevant MEPs to bring the conversation to their attention.



D. Utilize youth networks:

Collaborate with existing youth networks, organizations, and councils that have a presence in the policy space. These groups can provide you with resources, support, and opportunities to engage more effectively with EU representatives. By working together, you can amplify your impact, share knowledge, and ensure your voice is heard in broader discussions. Joining forces with others who share your goals can also help you gain access to decision-makers and increase the legitimacy of your efforts.

5.3 Tips for youth workers:

Youth workers play a critical role in empowering young people to engage with EU representatives. By providing guidance, support, and resources, you can help young people navigate the policy-making process and advocate for their interests effectively. The following tips are designed to help you in this important work.

A. Facilitate dialogue:

One of the most important roles of a youth worker is to help young people articulate their concerns and communicate effectively with decision-makers. This might involve providing them with the tools and training they need to feel confident in their interactions, such as role-playing exercises, workshops on public speaking, and background information on relevant issues. Encourage young people to express their thoughts clearly and support them in crafting messages that are both compelling and appropriate for their audience.



B. Build partnerships:

Establishing connections with youth-led organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders can significantly enhance your advocacy efforts. These partnerships can provide additional resources, support, and opportunities for youth engagement. Collaborating with other organizations not only strengthens your voice but also broadens your reach, making it more likely that your efforts will have a meaningful impact. For example, partnering with a well-known NGO could lend additional credibility to your cause and help you gain access to influential policymakers.

C. Train and prepare:

Preparing young people for meetings with MEPs is crucial for successful engagement. Help them develop clear and persuasive messages by offering practical support, such as role-playing meetings, providing background information on the MEPs they'll be meeting, and helping them anticipate potential questions or challenges. The more prepared they are, the more confident and effective they'll be in their advocacy. Additionally, ensure that they understand the importance of follow-up after meetings, such as sending thank-you notes or providing additional information.

D. Advocate and build capacity:

Advocate for youth participation at all levels of your organization and work to build the capacities of young people so they can engage meaningfully in EU policy-making processes. This includes providing them with opportunities to lead initiatives, participate in decision-making processes, and develop the skills they need to be effective advocates. Encourage youth to take on leadership roles within their communities and support them in building the networks and knowledge that will enable them to make a lasting impact.



6. CONCLUSIONS:

Youth participation in the European Union is not only a right but a powerful tool for shaping the future of Europe. This guide has outlined the numerous channels through which young people and youth workers can engage with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and influence EU policies. From understanding the roles and responsibilities of MEPs to actively participating in initiatives like the European Youth Event and the Ambassador Schools Programme, there are abundant opportunities for meaningful involvement.

The European Parliament's commitment to youth engagement is evident in its various programs and the accessible platforms it provides for communication and collaboration. Whether through direct contact with MEPs, participation in onsite events, or leveraging online platforms and social media, young people and youth workers have the tools to make their voices heard. This guide also emphasizes the importance of preparation, strategic communication, and building relationships—key components in ensuring that advocacy efforts are effective and impactful.

As we move forward, it is crucial that young Europeans continue to embrace these opportunities and actively contribute to the democratic processes that shape their lives. The strategies and tips provided in this guide are not just for immediate use but are intended to foster a sustained commitment to civic engagement. By remaining informed, connected, and proactive, youth across Europe can ensure that their perspectives are integral to the development of policies that affect not only their present but also the future of the European Union.



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