

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EUROPEAN CITIZEN'S  
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: FROM EUROPEAN  
YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVES



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EUROPEAN YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVES  
By                                      Miss Huiting Chen  
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Huiting Chen : FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EUROPEAN CITIZEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: FROM EUROPEAN YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVES. Advisor: Asst. Prof. SURACHANEE SRIYAI, Ph.D.

The political participation of young people can undoubtedly have a positive impact on a country. Especially in the EU as a democratic country, the political participation of citizens is also very important for the EU. However, it can be seen in the previous literature that the youth population is not very enthusiastic in terms of political participation. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that influence the political participation of European youth. And the main gap of this paper is to elaborate on the mismatch between the definition of political participation and the perception of youth regarding what is political.

In this paper, I present an analytical study of the factors influencing young people's political participation using data from the Eurobarometer-Ipsos European Public Affairs, which included 18156 respondents between the ages of 16 and 30 in 27 European Union member states. According to the statistical analysis's findings, there are four main factors that affect young people's political participation in Europe: forms of political participation, political education, political interest, and tools for political participation.

This study adds to the body of knowledge on the involvement of young people in politics.

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Huiting Chen



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

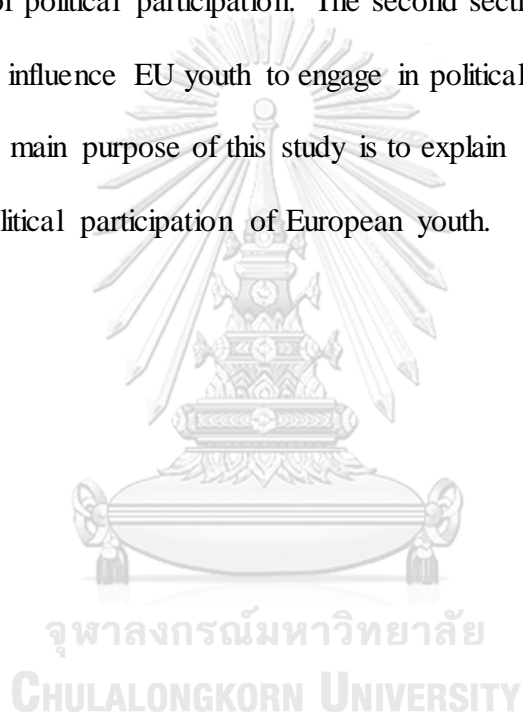
### 1. INTRODUCTION

Countries in the European Union (EU) are participatory and representative democracies. Many democracies have seen low or declining voter turnout, as well as a severe reduction in the membership of established political parties, in recent decades. These developments are most noticeable among young people, who in many nations around the world have become alienated from mainstream electoral politics (James Sloam, 2018). Therefore, an active sense of citizen participation in the EU and a sense of trust in the EU institutions are very important (Cicognani, 2018). This paper explores the factors associated with European citizens' political participation from the perspectives of European youth.

When it comes to the political participation of young people in contemporary Europe, there is a paradox. In the literature, proponents of the "disengagement" paradigm cite empirical facts, such as the fact that young adults are the least likely to vote in national elections, that youth membership in political parties is dropping, and that political interest is usually low (Weiss, 2020). The literature on youth participation paradigm, on the other hand, has a more positive stance, as it is based on the discovery of new forms of political engagement that are more appealing to and utilized by young people (Weiss, 2020).

Both standpoints raise concerns about the role of young people in European democracy as the two perspectives mark the conclusion of a more complex

line of inquiry into this subject. Although the research in this area might be perplexing, it is obvious that a thorough understanding of the scope and patterns of young political participation is inadequate (Weiss, 2020). I found that the main gap of knowledge in the literature is the mismatch between the definition of political participation and the perception of young adults regarding what is political. So, in the first section of this paper, I introduce the definition of political participation. The second section demonstrates the factors that influence EU youth to engage in political participation. Finally, the main purpose of this study is to explain what factors are associated with the political participation of European youth.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 What is political participation**

Over the last few decades, the study of political participation has evolved significantly. Multiple disciplines have contributed to a better understanding of the area, but the underlying core assumptions and concepts that make up the term “political participation” have become less obvious as a result of this interdisciplinary contribution.

In general, signing a petition, joining a political party, or voting are the most widely acknowledged forms of political participation. So let us go back a few decades in time to see the different meanings of the political participation in each period.

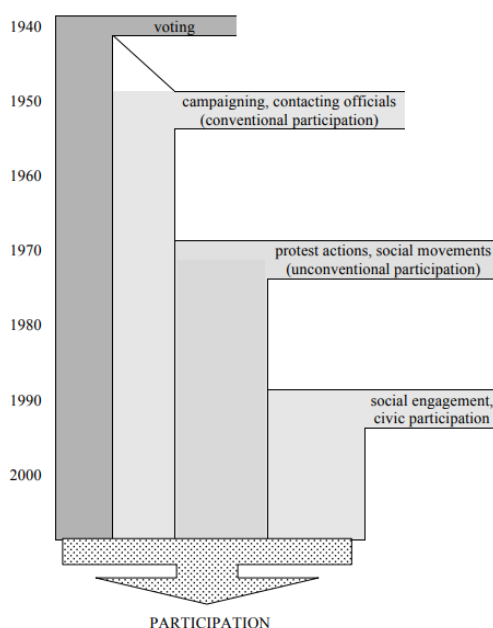
By following the publishing of important research, Van Deth (2001) effectively outlines the evolution of political participation (PP) repertoires from the 1940s to the 1990s.

PP was mostly used for voting and campaigning in the 1940s and 1950s.

However, in the early 1960s, the so-called "conventional" types of political participation emerged. At that time, “political participation was broadly understood as activities concerned with traditional conceptualizations of politics as campaigning by politicians and parties, and with well-accepted contacts between citizens and public officials” (Van Deth, 2001, p.5). During the 1970s, these traditional forms were broadened, and "unconventional" forms emerged that did not conform to 1970s society standards. Protest and rejection, as well as new social movements like women's and pacifist groups,

were among the unorthodox manifestations. Later, in the 1990s, the distinction between the political and non-political domains of modern society was blurred, as the political involvement repertory expanded to encompass "civil" activities like volunteering and social engagement. ( Figure1 below illustrates the evolution of political participation as suggested in the book.)

Figure 1 The Expansion of the Political Action Repertoire



Source: Deth, J. W. v. (2001). Studying Political Participation: Towards a Theory of Everything?

Nowdays, political participation research is currently being challenged by the emergence of new kinds of PP. Non-political conduct is used to convey political beliefs in the new forms, and what was formerly considered unusual or elite-challenging is now mainstream. As a result, the dichotomy between conventional and unusual political engagement no longer captures these forms(Montero, Teorell, & Torcal, 2007).

The distinction between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized PP captures types of PP that take place within an institutional framework (e.g., voting or party membership) and those that take place outside of an institutional framework (e.g., voting or party membership) (e.g., protest or boycotting). Given that young individuals are disproportionately more likely to engage through non-institutionalized ways, the distinction between institutionalized and non-institutionalized PP is especially essential for any research on adolescent participation.

Furthermore, adapting to new kinds of engagement or being challenged by them is an ongoing process. Online participation is one of the most recent advancements in this area.

## **2.2 Online participation of EU youth**

People can now not only see information published on the internet, but also engage in the communication process, thanks to the advent of the second-generation internet, or Web 2.0, in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Gausis, 2017). Since the introduction of social media sites such as Facebook.com and Twitter.com, this has gotten even easier. Furthermore, unlike traditional media, where a journalist or content editor can determine what material becomes public and what stays on the desk, social media allows direct connection without third-party interruption. It implies that institutions like the European Parliament and the European Commission can be closer to their citizens than ever before. Social media provides an unparalleled opportunity to directly provide information to people while also receiving

input in the form of comments, direct messages, and "like" buttons.

Furthermore, social media platforms are well suited to disseminating visual content such as photos, films, and infographics that aid in the explanation of complex information (Gausis, 2017).

European institutions are clearly aware of the good significance of social media in engaging with citizens; at least, that is what can be deduced from a review of their social media operations. During the 2009 election campaign, the European Parliament began to use social media. Since then, the usage of social media by European institutions has increased dramatically. European institutions publish to more than 10 distinct social media platforms, according to the EU social networks search engine, which also gives data on more than 15 different European organizations and agencies (European Commission 2017). Each institution typically has many social media accounts, as well as personal profiles for public figures, funding and cooperation projects, and even special events, resulting in thousands of social media accounts giving information on EU topics (Gausis, 2017). So, social networking platforms not only give European communitarians a platform where they can engage in political dialogue or political participation with European institutions, but also give European institutions a more people-centric platform to share information. European teenagers are also happy to engage politically on social media, according to the Eurostat database "Youth in the Digital World", 92 percent of the youth in 2015 participated in social networks and among the youth of age 16 – 19, this proportion was even bigger – 96 percent (Eurostat 2017).

What is certain is that young people's perceptions of politics and repertoires of engagement have changed. Political participation is increasingly viewed through the lens of individual action frameworks, whereby 'formal organizations are losing their grip on individuals, and group ties are being replaced by large-scale fluid social networks' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

These networks serve as the foundation for alternate kinds of political participation that tend to better suit the inclinations of younger voters for horizontal types of participation. For instance, it is much more appealing to sign a friend's online petition against the government's "snooping" on people's online activities than it is to actively support the wide platform of a top-down organization like a political party.

The Internet and social media have enabled a dramatic speeding up of political mobilisation by: acting as a real-time filter for alternative politics, where only the most resonant ideas – such as 'The outraged young' and 'We are the 99%!' – rise to the surface; and, radically reducing communication costs for participation (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). During this wave of youth protest we have witnessed the emergence of a new 'logic of connective action... based on personalized content sharing across media networks' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This perfect storm of political outrage and readily available new technology facilitated the engagement of many young people into social movements, such as Occupy and the Spanish Indignados, with a cosmopolitan-left core. This, in turn, laid the seeds for their participation in the electoral process where and when the conditions were right.

Web 2.0 and social media have also become important features of electoral politics. First, they have dramatically altered how young people learn about politics. Comparative research across 36 countries by the Reuters Institute (2017) found that the proportion of adults using social media as a news source almost doubled (from 23% to 46%) between 2013 and 2017.

So here is one example that Latvian youth used social media platform to engage in political. Since there are no dedicated EU courses in Latvian schools, the major source of EU information can be friends, or the media. As a result, social media has the potential to serve as a link between EU institutions and individuals, particularly the younger people, in order to improve their knowledge of the EU. Gausis (2017) examined three different types of social media in order to assess how this potential is realized in Latvia.

In Latvia, the European Parliament maintains four accounts: one on Facebook.com (Facebook1), one on the Latvian regional social media site Draugiem.lv (Draugiem1), and two on Twitter.com. The content was studied over a six-month period, from July to December 2015, and a total of 1348 messages were posted and reviewed during this time: 261 from Facebook1, 206 from Draugiem1, 401 from Twitter1, and 480 from Twitter2. Overall, the study's findings provide information on the type of social media posting in the European Parliament, the most often discussed themes, and how individuals react to social media content. The data reveal which themes and posting techniques generate the most feedback, which can be leveraged to engage social media users and facilitate two-way dialogue in the future (Gausis, 2017).



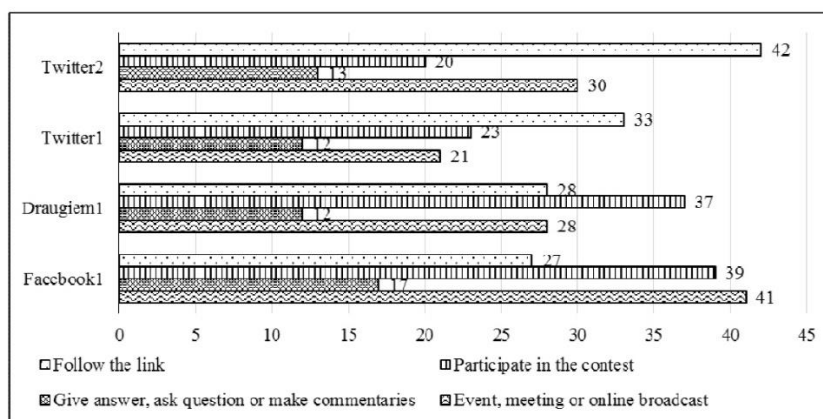


Figure 2 Latvian accounts of the European Parliament's social media from July 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015. Most popular call-for-action types used in the entries (number of entries)

As figure 2 showed, The European Parliament uses a variety of call-to-action strategies on social media, as well as in media pieces. Figure 2 depicts the four most popular ways, with clear distinctions between each social media account.

### 2.3 The factors that influence EU youth to engage in political participation

The tectonic plates that form and support democratic participation have altered over several decades. Economic, social, cultural, and political developments have all taken place, and they are all connected (James Sloam, 2018). (see figure 3)

Figure 3 Trends in young people's politics



Source: Rejuvenating Politics: Young Political Participation in a Changing World

Postindustrial democracies went through a protracted era of economic expansion, rising educational achievement, reorganization of the labor market, and relaxation of conventional standards pertaining to religion and family life between the 1960s and the 2000s. As a result, youth to adult transitions are now delayed and spaced out (Arnett 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Flanagan 2013). Compared to past decades, young people today continue their education longer, start working full-time later, marry later, and have children later. In the European Union, the proportion of people aged 15 to 24 who are still in school increased from 49% in 1987 to 58% in 1995 to 68% in 2007, while the median age of a young person starting a job increased from 18 to 20 during the same time period (European Commission 2008). According to

Smets (2012), these changes have significant effects on political involvement since older and younger persons vote at higher rates in nations with more diverse patterns of maturity.

“Young Millennials have more options than other generations, but they also run more risks”(Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 2006). There is no longer a realistic chance of a job for life due to structural changes in the labor market (Goodwin et al. 2017, Bessant 2018), and identities are now molded by fluid categories of class, community, ethnicity, and culture (Bauman 2000). These changes have fueled the emergence of identity politics as well as the individualization of values and lifestyles. In a networked society, young people must continuously reinvent themselves both economically and socially, from their resumes to their Facebook pages(Castells, 2015). When citizens do participate, their involvement is increasingly driven by personally relevant issues that align with their lifestyles and evolving social networks (Norris 2002; Bennett and Segerberg 2013).

Physical location continues to be crucial for young people's politics because it helps them develop a sense of identity, provides opportunities to exercise democratic principles, and offers iconic venues (like town squares and college campuses) for political engagement (Weller 2003; Hopkins and Todd 2015).

Though communities have been reformed across traditional territorial lines as a result of the enormous diversity of the Millennial Generation and the development of new communication technology, political action is now increasingly conducted through social networks in "hybrid public spaces"(Castells, 2015). On the other hand, increased diversity has also

sparked an authoritarian-nationalist response, which has caused some people to withdraw within their national, regional, and religious identities.

Distinct democracies have quite different patterns of political participation, as we have already noted. Even between democratic regimes that are comparable, there are significant differences. For instance, the percentage of young people who voted in the UK's four elections between 2001 and 2015 was around 40%, while it was 80% in Sweden over the same time period (Sloam, 2016). Youth involvement in rallies and protests has a long history in France and Spain. Young people are more likely to join petitions in the UK than in the majority of other European nations (Dalton, 2017).

However, some trends can be found throughout all of these nations (Fig. 2, above). As we have stated previously, traditional political institutions and mainstream politicians have severely lost their ability to represent the public in recent years. A move from politics to policy has been made possible by the expansion of issue-based lifestyle politics, in which citizens, lawmakers, and government officials have jointly switched "the emphasis from democratic participation to good governance" (Bang and Esmark 2009: 18). For instance, Chadwick and May (2003) demonstrate how e-democracy changed from being seen (by politicians) as a tool for democratic participation to being seen (by the public) as a tool for effective government (providing cheap and convenient online services).

The recent financial crisis has increased the economic dangers for young people from all social levels. In the five years following 2008, youth unemployment rose significantly in the majority of the countries, and jobs also

became more unstable (Verick 2009; Erk 2017). Youth unemployment exceeded 50% in the nations most severely impacted by the sovereign debt crisis, such as Greece and Spain (OECD 2015).

We must also keep in mind that an individual's standing and advancement in society are influenced by a variety of factors, including their socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity, in addition to their cognitive and social abilities (though these do play a significant impact) (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). These elements may have an impact on a young person's ability to enter representative politics, as well as how they are treated by authorities and whether they are asked to job interviews (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003). Given what we know about the crucial role that economic resources play in deciding whether or not a person participates in politics, this definitely important for youth political involvement (Verba et al. 1995).

It was emphasized in a study on youth participation in European democratic life why teenagers must be educated about the value of civic engagement.

“The first two elections in a voter's life are key to determining his or her long-term participation. Those who do not participate in the first two elections after qualifying are likely to become habitual abstainers, but those who do participate are likely to become habitual participants (EACEA 2013, p. 9)”. It is also critical to ensure youth engagement in the democratic process because the decisions taken by today's leaders will have an impact on their lives and future possibilities.

Furthermore, the engagement of the youth ensures credibility, as “without their consent and commitment, the authority of politicians and policy-makers

to represent the values and interests of future citizens is called into question (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014)”.

Reaching out to young and including them in decision-making, then, should be a priority for EU institutions.

As a result, various programs in the EU are employed to boost youth political engagement. For example, the Erasmus+ programme aims to “improve the skills level of young people, support their participation in democratic life and in the labour market, and promote active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity (Parliament, 2021)”. Euroscola, which was founded in December 2016, enables European adolescents to participate in activities such as volunteering and work both in their home country and abroad. While, initiatives like Euroscola and European Youth Events enable young people to express themselves and interact with politicians, these programs' goals reflect the broad and complex nature of EU youth policy that, mixes cultural and educational activities to assist assure Europe's young's economic and political empowerment (Affairs, September 2021). Finally, one of the latest EU projects on youth is The future of the European project, which is also called the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. The future of the European project, which is dependent on young people, their attachment to democratic values, their readiness to embrace a European identity, and their active participation in the political process. Given that today's decisions will influence young people's future, they must not be excluded or alienated from politics. Promoting their civic and political participation at the local, national,

and European levels is critical to ensuring a prosperous future for the EU and for young people themselves(Affairs, September 2021).



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

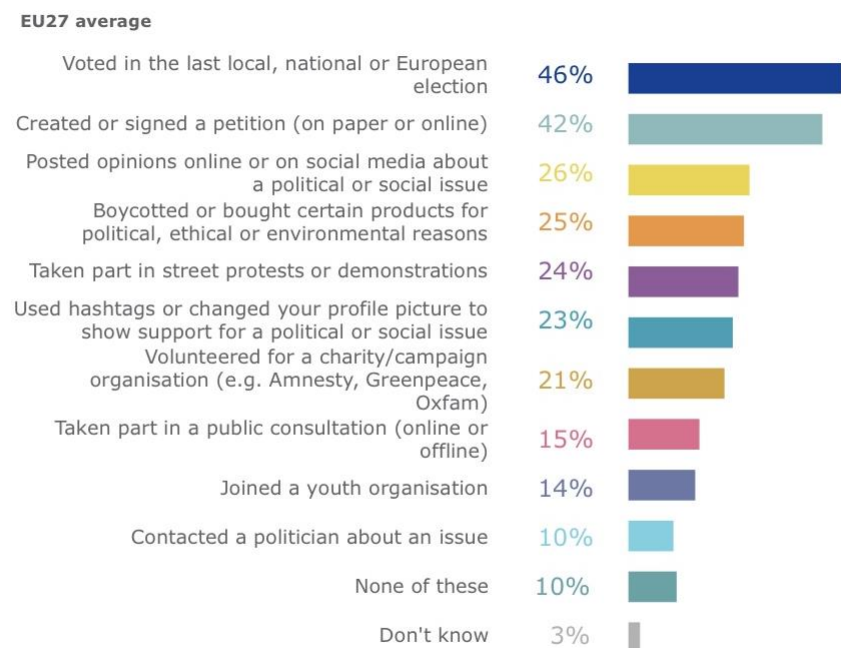
This paper utilizes data from the Eurobarometer-Ipsos European Public Affairs (Affairs, September 2021) comparative survey on youth engagement: a dataset consisting of 18156 respondents across 27 members of the European Union countries. In each of the 27 member nations of the European Union, Ipsos European Public Affairs conducted interviews with a representative sample of youth ages 16 to 30. Ipsos online panels and their partner network were used to conduct a computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) survey of 18156 young people between June 18 and June 27, 2021. In Luxembourg, some of the respondents were attracted via social media. According to established demographic proportions, survey data are weighted. The weighting of the averages for the EU27 is determined by the number of 16 to 30 year olds in each EU Member State.

#### **3.2 Statistical Analysis**

Narrow definitions of political engagement result in narrow perceptions of politics that adults impose on young people (Marsh et al., 2007, 4). As a result, as was previously said, focusing on the most popular instruments as a key tool for analyzing political engagement misses the mark in terms of showing how young people think about politics and mistakenly connects abstinence from a set range of activities with apathy.



Figure 4 Have you ever done any of the following? (%-EU27)



Source: European Parliament Youth Survey- Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

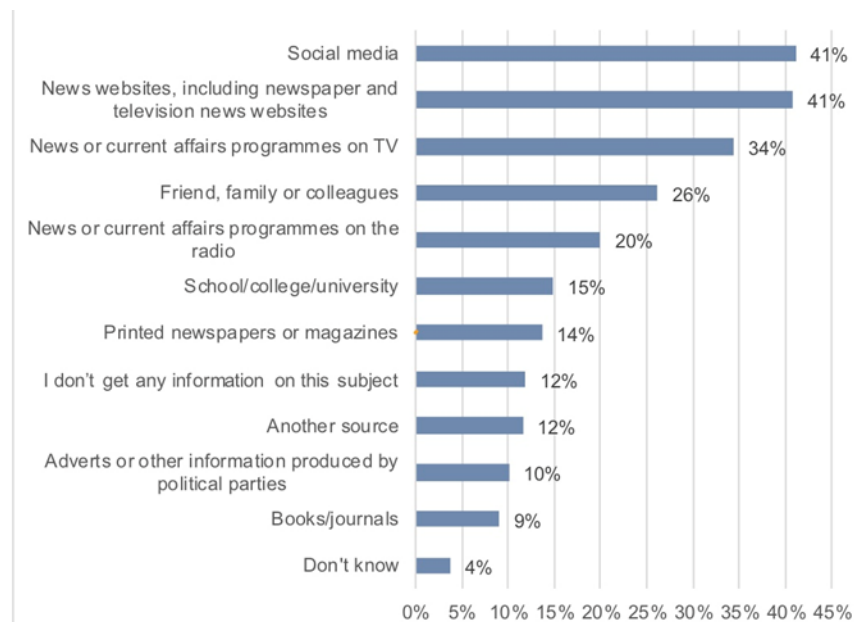
As the figure 4 that just 46% of young Europeans participated in the most recent local, national, or European election, it is clear that those who are politically active have a wide range of alternatives at their disposal. Signing a petition, whether online or off, is still the most popular and traditional way to get involved (42 percent). It is also evident that unconventional shapes are becoming more popular. Although almost a quarter (26%) of young people share their opinions on political or social issues online, this method does not address the issue of young people and survey designers having similar political views, which could lead to more accurate results. Young Europeans make up 25% of this group, and 25% of them practice politically conscious consumerism through product boycotts, also known as consumer boycotts, which is the intentional purchase of a particular product or the deliberate non-

purchase of a particular product on the basis of moral, ethical, or environmental considerations. 24 percent of young people participate in street protests and demonstrations, while 23 percent of young Europeans change their social media profile pictures or hashtags to support political or social concerns. Online or offline, 15% of young people routinely participate in public consultations, and 21% volunteer for political or charitable causes. It's important to keep in mind while assessing these results that just 10% of survey participants reported not taking any imaginable political action, which is still a fairly low amount. Elections are the most popular form of political action, with 46% of respondents reporting voting participation and 10% not taking part in any other political acts. This finding suggests that the traditional, one-dimensional view of the people involved, from apolitical to political to maximal (see Milbrath 1965), is irrelevant and that we should instead discuss a multidimensional concept that suggests that some people are extremely positive in some mode (see Moyser 2003, 177; Verba et al. 1995).

Additional Flash Eurobarometer (2021) findings that assess how frequently young people discuss political and social problems with their friends and family provide weight to the aforementioned findings. The analysis revealed that only 13% of young people never discuss social and political issues with their friends or family (see Table 1 in the Appendix). Among young people who do discuss political and social topics (86%) either occasionally (61%) or frequently (70%), only a small minority (up to 15%) appear to be entirely detached from significant political and social concerns (25 percent ). Even

though some members of this group are politically active, they do not see politics in that light.

Figure 5 From which of these sources do you get most of your information on political and social issues? Please select up to three responses. (%-EU27)



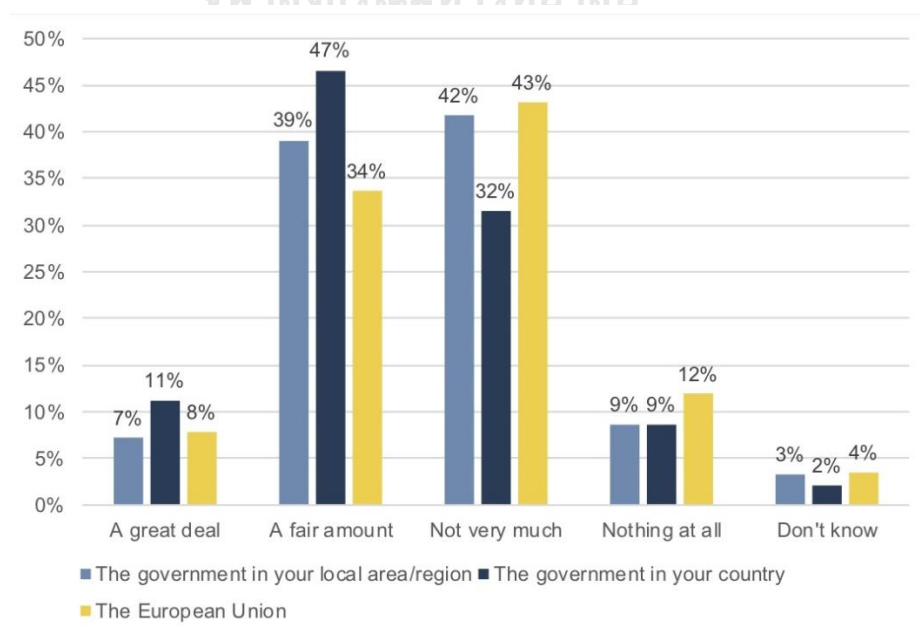
Source: European Parliament Youth Survey- Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

The Flash Eurobarometer (2021), it shows the importance of social media as a source of information and that, together with news websites, social media is the top source of information for young Europeans. Both sources are cited as being among the top three significant sources of knowledge by 41% of respondents (see Figure 5). Following that, the most popular information sources before the development of the Internet and social media were listed in order of popularity: radio (20%), friends, colleagues, and family (26%), and television (34%). Notably, just 9% of youths in Europe claim to obtain their

political knowledge through books or journals. In addition, 4% of European young still don't know where to look for political information.

The social media sites that young people use most frequently to obtain information on political and social issues are not surprising. Facebook is the most widely used tool, with 54% of respondents citing it as the most relevant source, followed by Instagram (48%) YouTube (35%), and Twitter (29 percent). (See Table 3 in the Appendix). Significant differences can be seen in the younger age groups. For instance, whereas 10 percent more women use Instagram as their main source of information, male use YouTube as their main source of information 17 percent more often than females do. Similar to the preceding point, there are significant age discrepancies, with 16 to 19-year-olds using Facebook at a rate of 26% compared to those aged 26 to 30. However, compared to people aged 26 to 30, 30% more 16 to 19-year-olds use Instagram.

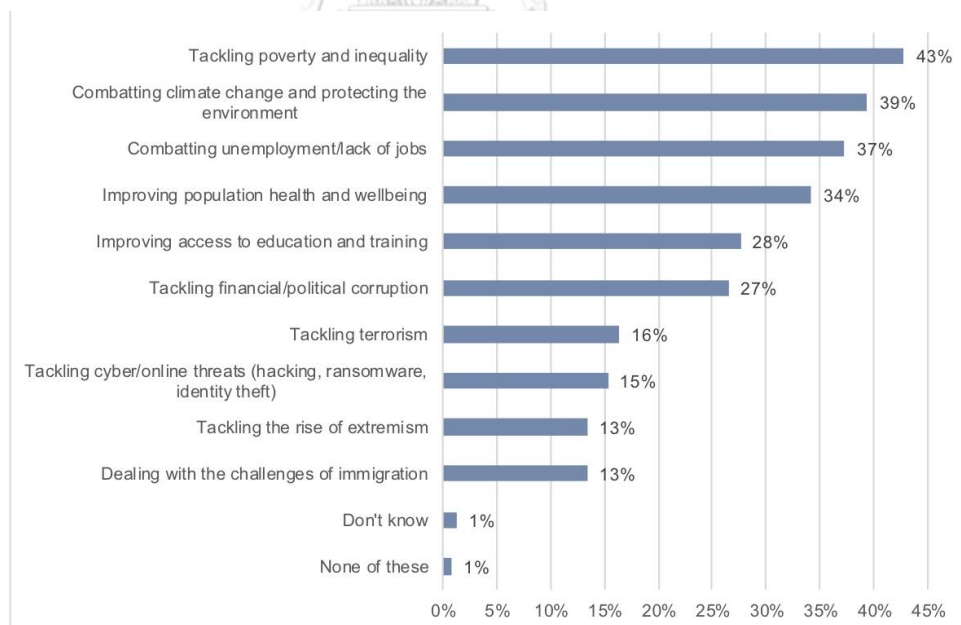
Figure 6 How much, if anything, do you feel you understand about...? (%-EU27)



Source: European Parliament Youth Survey- Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

The EU was the subject about which people knew the least, according to 55% of survey respondents. 41 percent of respondents believed they knew very little or nothing about national governance. As 8–10% more women than men report knowing less or nothing about all three levels of institutions, the measure unmistakably exposes a gender gap in institutional politics understanding, which is interestingly experimentally documented as early as the 1960s (see Campbell et al. 1960).

Figure 7 In your opinion, which three of the following issues should be given priority? (%-EU27)

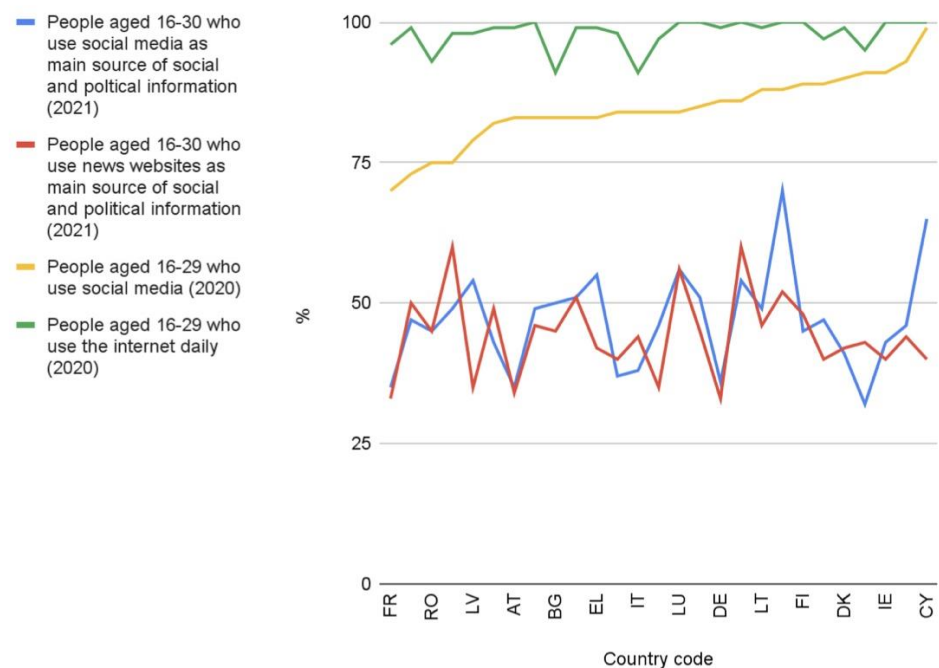


Source: European Parliament Youth Survey- Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

Young people prioritize addressing poverty and inequality (selected by 43% of young people), as well as combatting climate change and protecting the environment (picked by 39% of young people), according to the Flash

Eurobarometer (2021). (see Figure 7). Traditional problems facing young people like youth unemployment (37%) remain a top concern, as do issues like education and training (28%) and health and well-being (34%) This focus on lifestyle politics amplifies the model's importance for obtaining citizenship. Corruption, a manifestation of integrity that adversely affects trust, has also been demonstrated to be important (27 percent). Cyberthreats (15 percent), extremism (13 percent), and immigration make up the remaining issues (13 percent)

Figure 8 Young people's digital source of political information compared to internet usage by country (EU-27)

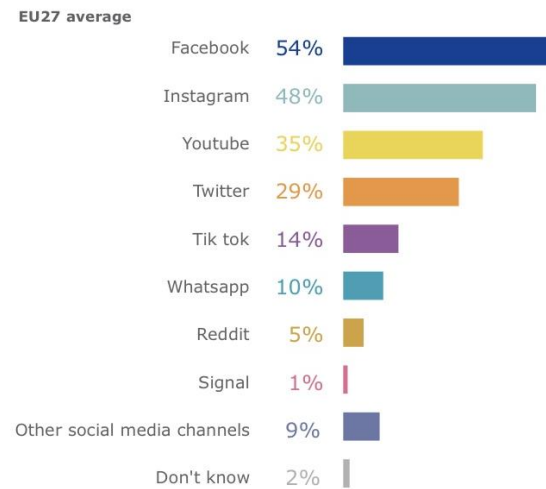


Source: EP Youth Survey (2021), Eurostat (2021a) and Eurostat (2021b).

Eurostat Data for FR substituted with 2019 data.

Young people's use of social media and news websites for political information does not appear to be influenced by how they use the Internet generally. According to the European Parliament Youth Survey, there are considerable regional differences in the proportion of young people who predominantly get their political news via social media or news websites. In Figure 8, Eurostat figures on the proportion of youth using the Internet and social media (daily) in 2020 are compared to the results of the European Parliament Youth Survey. It shows that the percentage of youth in each country who consider the Internet and social media to be their main source of news does not seem to be affected by the percentage of youth in each country who use the Internet and social media. This demonstrates that there may be a connection between country-specific variations in political material on social media and news websites and other factors, such as domestic politics or opinions about the reliability of information sources (see European Commission, 2017). A serious policy worry is that some EU countries' youth have less access to the internet than youth in other nations (Serban et al 2020). The effectiveness of EU-wide political communication projects, however, does not appear to be much impacted by regional differences in digital access and usage.

Figure 9 From which social media channels do you get most of your information on political and social issues? (%-EU27)



Source: EP Youth Survey (2021)

The EP Youth Survey shows that there is little publicly available data on general demographic trends in social media use (Figure 9). The data also shows that Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube are the three platforms where young people in Europe most frequently get political information. Facebook and Instagram have the highest penetration rates, and usage patterns vary by gender, age, and country (e.g. Sprout Social,2021,Statsi.com2021). Due to the quick changes in platform usage, the results from the EP Youth Survey might only be useful for a brief period of time. For instance, TikTok, which debuted in its current incarnation in 2017, is the most important social media channel for 14% of young people to access political information (Figure 9). The frequently conducted youth surveys by the European Parliament are an essential source of information for many elements of youth policy since they have access to up-to-date data and the capacity to identify patterns in internet usage.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the survey data mentioned above, I found that the political participation of European teenagers is not that low (as shown in Figure 4). Nearly half of the youth are politically engaged, with voting and signing petitions being the two most common forms of political engagement. It is important to note that more than 10% of European teenagers are not involved in any political activity and a small percentage are not even aware of it. And as shown in Figure 6, most European teenagers know about their own country's politics, compared to their knowledge of the European Union as a whole. Secondly, the interest of young people in politics is more focused on social issues, such as poverty, environmental protection and other topics. Finally, teenagers nowadays have many channels to get political information, either through online social networks, offline political activities or by talking to their friends and family.

Therefore, from the above analysis, I conclude that four main factors influence the political participation of European youth. The first one is the form of political participation, because most of the young people are still involved in political activities in the form of voting and signing petitions. It would be easier for young people to participate if there were more simple and more participatory activities. Secondly, political education, because some young people do not participate in political activities not because they are not interested in politics, but because they do not have the political environment

and knowledge, they do not understand and do not know what political activities are. Therefore, if the EU can improve the political education environment of European youth in each country, the political participation rate of European youth will be greatly increased. The third is political interest, for example, we can see from figure 7 that nowadays teenagers are most concerned about poverty and inequality. Therefore, if the EU conducts more such lectures or political activities, it will attract more young people to participate in them. The last factor is the tool of political participation, the most mentioned above is social media, as we can see in Figure 8, European teenagers use social media almost every day and use it as the main source of political information. Therefore, through social media, especially Facebook and Ins, more European youths can participate in political participation more easily and transparently. Not only can the EU quickly gather political interests of young people through social media, but young people can also participate in political activities more easily.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Compared to other age groups and persons from decades before, young people are less involved in institutional politics. As academics and other demographic groups frequently disagree on what constitutes politics, this is also a result of out-of-date standards of quantifying political engagement. The extended definition changes the focus of the discussion of youth participation from whether they are participating to where they are involved because young people are more likely to engage in non-institutional political activity (Moxon, 2021). There are many other common activities besides elections, which are still the major way to influence the political system (demonstrations, petitions, participation in consumption, etc.). The fact that just one in ten young people claimed to not engage in any political action and that the same number never discuss social and political topics with their friends and family proves that a greater proportion of young people than is generally believed are politically engaged.

According to the previous literature, politics can be defined differently by different generation at different time period (Weiss, 2020). The evolution of politics is influenced by a wide range of variables, including economic development, educational attainment, globalization, geographic location, and financial risk (James Sloam, 2018). Most people link political activity with urban areas and college campuses when it comes to the physical location

element. mainly because youth political participation and political activity are more likely to be identified with these landmarks.

The main objective of this paper is to examine the elements that influence the political participation of youths in Europe. The study collected data from 18,156 individuals aged 16 to 30 years in 27 European countries. In the above discussion I found that there are four main factors that affect the political participation of European adolescents. The first is the form of political participation of teenagers. Although the political participation of teenagers is not low, the form is still too monotonous, and their main form of participation is still voting and signing petitions. Therefore, the EU can provide more forms of political activities for young people to participate in. The second factor is political education. In the analysis of the survey, it was found that many European teenagers do not participate in political activities not because they are not interested but because they do not know about political participation and political activities. Therefore, the European Union can provide more political courses in each country, so that young people can have a good political academic environment, and more young people can participate in political activities. The third factor is the political interest of teenagers. As we can see from the figure 7, the political issues of teenagers are more focused on social issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental issues and unemployment. Therefore, if the EU can match the political interest of youth with political issues, it will increase the participation of youth in politics. The last factor is the political participation tool, social media is now undoubtedly one of the main sources of political information for teenagers (as shown in

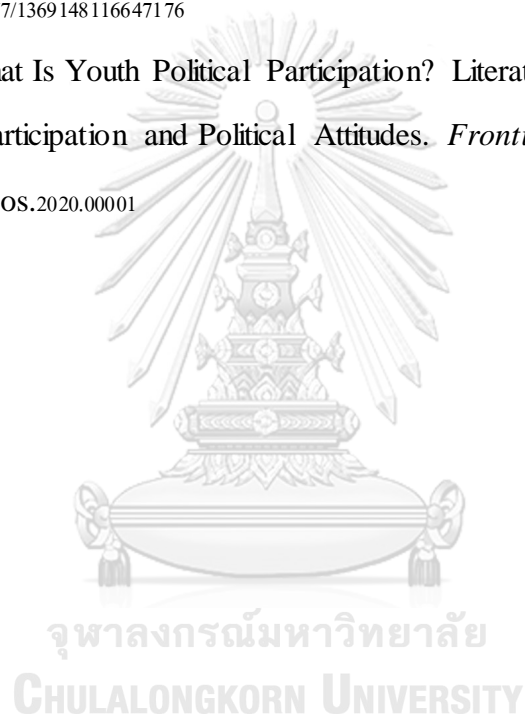
Figures 8 and 9). Almost one hundred percent of teens go online every day, and more than fifty percent of teens use social media as their primary source of political information. Social tools are dominated by Facebook and Instagram (as shown in Figure 9). Among them, Tic tok, a social platform that only emerged in 2017, also shows great potential as a means of political access for some teenagers due to its high usage and dissemination rate. Therefore, the EU can make good use of the characteristics of these social tools to promote political interaction between the EU and teenagers.

For this paper, the definition of gap - political participation does not match the perception of political participation of teenagers. The above analysis can also briefly explain that this is due to the lack of political information for some teenagers and the excessive information of social media nowadays. Therefore, in future research I think it is a good direction to study how the EU can reasonably use the characteristics of social media to educate teenagers about politics and to match political participation.

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## Appendix

Table 1: When you get together with friends or relatives, how often, if at all do you discuss political and social issues...?

	EU27	Male	Female	In another way / Prefer not to say	16 - 19 years	20 - 25 years	26 - 30 years
FREQUENTLY	4457	2526	1898	32	901	1838	1718
	25%	27%	22%	29%	20%	26%	26%
OCCASSIONALLY	10988	5538	5393	58	2627	4274	4088
	61%	60%	61%	52%	58%	60%	62%
NEVER	2381	1040	1323	18	874	846	662
	13%	11%	15%	16%	19%	12%	10%
DON'T KNOW	330	156	171	3	126	118	85
	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)



Table 2: And in your opinion, which three of the following values are most important?

	EU27	male	female	In another way / prefer not to say	16 - 19 years	20 - 25 years	26 - 30 years
The protection of human rights and democracy	56%	52%	60%	61%	53%	55%	58%
Freedom of speech	48%	49%	47%	25%	51%	47%	48%
Gender equality	38%	29%	48%	55%	43%	38%	34%
Solidarity with weaker members of society	19%	21%	18%	16%	16%	19%	22%
Solidarity between people	36%	34%	38%	31%	34%	35%	39%
Solidarity between European union member states	15%	19%	11%	20%	14%	15%	16%
Solidarity between the european union and poor countries around the world	16%	18%	14%	14%	16%	17%	15%
The protection of minority groups	18%	17%	19%	34%	20%	19%	16%
Gettting rid of the death penalty throughout the world	13%	13%	13%	12%	14%	13%	11%
None of these	2%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)



Table 3: From which of these sources do you get most of your information on political and social issues?

Please select up to three responses.

Q15b And from which social media channels do you get most of your information on political and social issues? Please select up to three responses.  
Base: If "Social Media" at Q15a (Q15a.3=1)

	EU27				Age			Eligible to vote in 2019		Education (End of)			
	EU27	Male (A)	Female (B)	In another way / Prefer not to say (C)	16 - 19 years (A)	20 - 25 years (B)	26 - 30 years (C)	No (A)	Yes (B)	Up to 15 (A)	16-19 (B)	20+ (C)	Still studying (D)
Base: Total	7987	3573	4345	69	1564	3537	2886	1516	6471	129	1623	2656	3000
Base: Weighted Total	7459	3489	3905	65	2022	3005	2432	1975	5484	114	1457	2236	3122
Facebook	3997 54%	1809 52% C	2164 55% A C	23 36%	749 37%	1562 52% A	1685 69% A B	730 37%	3267 60% A	68 60% D	882 61% D	1451 65% B D	1366 44%
Twitter	2157 29%	1077 31% B	1055 27%	25 39%	644 32% C	946 32% C	567 23%	635 32% B	1522 28% A	21 18% D	307 21% D	630 28% B	1092 14% A B C
Youtube	2607 35%	1533 44% B	1050 27%	23 36%	776 38% B C	1032 34%	799 33%	757 38% B	1849 34% A	36 32% D	525 36% D	756 34% C	1089 35%
Instagram	3595 48%	1490 43%	2071 53% A	34 52%	1297 64% B C	1463 49% C	834 34%	1263 64% B	2332 43% A	52 46% B C D	676 46% C	851 38% C	1772 57% B C
Whatsapp	746 10%	437 13% B	304 8%	6 9%	154 8% A	273 9% A B	320 13% A B	148 8% A	598 11% A	23 21% B C D	143 10% D	257 12% D	244 8%
Reddit	378 5%	289 8% B	83 2%	6 9% B	95 5% B	170 6% C	113 5% C	92 5% B	286 5% B	15 13% B C D	60 4% D	114 5% D	155 5%
Tik tok	1031 14%	418 12% A	597 15% A	16 24% A	499 25% B C	367 12% C	165 7% C	488 25% B	543 10% B	30 27% B C D	205 14% C	175 8% C	500 16% C
Signal	82 1%	48 1%	34 1%	0 0%	16 1% A	34 1% A	32 1% A	16 1% A	66 1% A	0 0% D	15 1% D	21 1% D	29 1% D
Other social media channels	677 9%	322 9%	346 9%	9 13%	167 8% A	277 9% A	233 10% A	162 8% A	515 9% A	13 11% D	145 10% D	201 9% D	239 8% D
Don't know	119 2%	50 1%	69 2%	0 0%	29 2% A	41 1% A	49 2% A	29 2% A	90 2% A	1 1% D	23 2% D	32 2% D	50 2% D

Source: European Parliament Youth Survey – Flash Eurobarometer (2021)

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