



**Forum:** 4<sup>th</sup> Committee (Political)

**Issue:** Promoting Ethical Standards for the Involvement of Youth in Politics and Protests

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## **Introduction**

Nowadays youth is getting more and more involved in politics in modern society. Young people are beginning to realize that politics can have a big impact either on accelerating or slowing down the social progress of society, the standard of living, improve quality of life and establish justice as far as possible. Today youth participation in the political life of society is one of the most pressing problems in many states. The urgency of this issue is connected with the growth of political activity of citizens trying to influence the current political process. According to statistics, there is an increase in the young people's impact on the functioning of the political system of society, on the formation of political institutions and on the process of making and enforcing varied political decisions.

On the one hand, such a tendency can provide adaptation to changing conditions and update of the state system. Furthermore, young people get opportunities to reflect on and understand their political attitudes by political participation.

The most common motives for political participation, particularly with youth, include the following:

- The motive of interest and attractiveness of politics as a sphere of personal success;
- Cognitive motive (politics give a person a formed picture of the world to aim for);
- Ideological motive (based on the coincidence of a person's own values, his ideological positions with the ideological values of the political system);
- The motive of the world's transformation: a very strong motive associated with understanding the imperfections of the existing world and the persistent desire to improve it.

On the other hand, youth's involvement in politics has some huge risks.

There is a tendency to a decrease in the level of youth confidence in the power institutions, which leads to an increase in absenteeism among young people. This increases the risk of the expansion of illegitimate forms of political participation, an increase in radical sentiment, even extremist ones.

There are situations in which young people succumb to strong pressure from society and take political participation involuntarily. They often break laws this way due to being under-aged for involvement in political processes.

Moreover, youth can be easily manipulated by more mature and experienced political figures and parties due to the lack of their own experience and strong ambition to change the world radically and quickly.

### **Definition of key terms**

Political practices of youth – an action taken by a citizen of the age between 14-16 and 24 to influence the outcome of a political issue.

Institutionalization – process of developing or transforming rules and procedures that influence a set of human interactions from informal to formal ones (mostly with a creation of a special institute for this type of interaction).

Political institutions – organizations which create, enforce, and apply laws, mediate conflicts, make governmental policy on the economy and social systems, providing representation for the populous.

Political process – the process of the formulation and administration of public policy usually by interaction between social groups and political institutions or between political leadership and public opinion.

Youth – people in the period between childhood and maturity (According to the UN classification, young people are those whose age is from 15 to 24 years. Today it is 1.2 billion people, that is, 18 percent of the global population)

### **Background information**

The term "participation" gained its extraordinary popularity in the political language and political ideology with the creation of a state. Mass interest in the problem of participation in politics was due, on the one hand, dissatisfaction with the

bourgeois-democratic system, its bureaucratization, the growing alienation of bourgeois political parties from other members of society. On the other hand, an increase in the amount of free time, cultural and educational level of the population, improvement in material well-being also had a huge impact on involvement in politics. Under these conditions people in different countries got a desire to be involved in the political life of a country or region.

The desire of young people to participate in political life of their country, unfortunately, may be used by different political parties that are pursuing their own interests. In this case, involvement of underaged youth in political activity, especially in illegal protests, may lead to severe consequences. It is possible that some of them are not fully conscious about the punishment that they can get for their participation in such protests – thus, the lives of young people that are still children in some respect, may change drastically. Moreover, sharp, categorical, and sometimes even radical statements of the politicians that are trying to attract youth may result in their radicalization. Thus, it should be kept in mind that educating young people, including underaged ones, is an important part of their preparation for future life in the society; however, involvement of underaged youth in active political life is a serious ethical question.

### **1) Current situation**

Nowadays people have opportunities to participate in politics by:

- being involved in activities of formal public organizations (parties, youth political organizations, etc.);
- being involved in the activities of informal organizations and movements (popular fronts, etc.);
- participate in elections and election campaigns and referendums;
- influence by public political views
- reading political periodicals and literature, listening to radio-programs and watching political TV-programs

### **2) Age restrictions**

In most countries of the world, the acquisition of an active electoral right is associated with a person attaining a certain age, often (but not always) equivalent to

the age of a civil majority. For example, in Russia, the USA, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Finland a person gets the right to vote on reaching the age of 18 years, in Japan - 20 years, in Brazil, Iran, Nicaragua and in Cuba - 16 years. For obtaining passive suffrage, higher age limits are usually provided. For example, a person who has reached 35 years old may be elected as President of the Russian Federation, and who has reached 50 years old as President of Italy.

Some countries may provide interesting examples of youth's political participation:

*1) Nigeria: Participation in Constitution-review process*

UNDP supported youth based CSO coalition to actively participate in the Constitution review process. A Nigerian Youth Agenda on Political Participation is now being developed ahead of the 2015 election together with a Nigerian Youth Inter party Forum. The forum will primarily be used by youth members across party lines to solve issues of common interest.

*2) Bangladesh: National Youth Parliament*

UNDP supported the establishment of a National Youth Parliament to empower active citizens at both local and national level and provide an opportunity for youth to contribute to the framing of national policy through direct dialogue with parliamentarians.

*3) Azerbaijan: Youth Participation in Decision Making and Policy Implementation*

## Relevant treaties

- laws governing the age of people eligible for political participation
- prohibition of agitation inciting social, racial, national or religious discord, propagandizing the inferiority of citizens on the basis of their attitude to religion, social, racial, national, religious or linguistic affiliation
- prohibition of bribing voters

## Possible solutions

- Supporting youth participation in political processes and democratic practices by Government (when they have reached their legal age);
- Promoting the proper environment (legal framework, policies, and plans) for the participation of young people in a wide range of processes and areas such as electoral and parliamentary processes, public administration and local management at both subnational and national levels.
- Encouraging skills of young people to actively participate in democratic practices, including in local, national and global processes (leadership training, etc.);
- Cultivating faith in progress by media sources;
- Ensuring availability of political education in schools, informing students about legal ways of participating in political life of their country;
- Organizing public debate within the society regarding the limits of underaged youth participation in politics.

## Useful links

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm>

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>

<http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-68>

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF00988230>