



**YOU PART**

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# **GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH PARLIAMENTS**

**FACTS**

**GOALS**

**PREPARATIONS**

**GUIDELINES**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

# GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH PARLIAMENTS

## FACTS

**Age** of participants: 12+

**Number** of participants: at least 10

**Duration:** minimum 1 year, optimum sustainable

## GOALS

Youth parliaments are crucial to providing young people with real opportunities to participate and encourage their involvement in shaping their communities. According to the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, young people have the right to participate in public life, but this right is often not fully respected or realised.

Youth parliaments are not only a platform for political education and participation, but also an important instrument for strengthening democratic society. Through active and meaningful participation in youth parliaments, young people learn to take responsibility and play an active role in shaping their future.

## PREPARATIONS

Real youth participation is not child's play. If young people should have a chance to change something at school, in their community, city, region or country they need stable self-elected and self-organised structures that are politically and financially supported by adults (municipal and regional councils and governments).

For the establishment and operation of a youth parliament, it is essential to have both the support of adults and a solid organisational basis. Ideally, it should be founded by the young people themselves or at least with their active participation.

To generate interest and commitment it is important to reach out directly to young people. Young people who cannot be reached via educational institutions, but rather via youth centres and other places where they spend their (free) time, should also be essentially included. For example, launch a campaign via social media and organise an initial meeting at a youth centre, school or online.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

- In principle, young people set the agenda, i.e. they develop their political demands and decide how they want to present them.
- It is important that youth parliaments deal with topics that concern both many and different groups of young people. All relevant young people should get the chance to participate (in the new established structure). Not only factors such as gender and education need to be taken into account, but also age differences between younger and older youth in particular.
- The accompanying adults (youth workers, etc.) ensure that democratic principles are followed and practised before and during votes: e.g. compromises must also be made when there are conflicts of interest; when agreeing on important topics and demands, a majority cannot simply rule over minorities, etc.
- The election of youth speakers - for a local presentation as well as for sending representatives to the regional and national youth parliament - should be representative and diverse. Not only those young people who already have the relevant skills due to their school education should have their say. Youth workers can empower young people with a workshop on how to present to a large audience.
- **TIP:** *For more information on this, see the corresponding unit in the Workshop chapter of the YouPart Digital Toolkit.*
- The accompanying adults support the process by providing necessary information about budgets, political responsibilities and competences (departments and local, regional, international level), legal situation, etc. This ensures that the young people's demands are addressed to the right decision-makers and that a realistic assessment is made of the chances of implementing the demands.
- The implementation at least of some demands should be possible in a relatively short time, a maximum of one year. If the usual implementation time is much longer, many young people will lose interest because they cannot see the results of their activities.
- In the process of participation, adults play a supporting and co-creative role and do not take on tasks alone just because they have more experience. A trusting, empowering attitude is an essential element of successful participation. Both the quantity (number of participants) and the quality of participation are important.
- **TIP:** *For more information on defining the quality of participation, see the corresponding unit in the Theory chapter of the YouPart Digital Toolkit.*

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Although the establishment of youth parliaments is ideally initiated and led by young people themselves, practice shows that many of these parliaments are the result of top-down initiatives. This is often due to the fact that independent organisation and establishment by young people can be a major challenge due to legal structures and/or organisational and practical matters. Different legal frameworks at local, regional and national levels require specific knowledge and resources that are often not readily available to young people.

In addition, setting up such structures requires a deep understanding of organisational processes that young people first have to learn. Support from adults, whether in the form of educational organisations, local authorities or political bodies, is therefore not only helpful but often essential in order to create and effectively operate the necessary structures. In this context, a co-creative approach is particularly valuable. Such an approach, in which adults and young people work together, makes it possible to utilise the strengths and resources of both groups to not only establish a youth parliament, but also to ensure sustainable and effective participation. This enables real influence on political decisions that goes beyond symbolic gestures and brings about real change.

**TIP:** *Do not organise the youth parliament in the legal form of an association (NGO). In this case, the legal entity must fulfil many obligations arising from the laws and regulations of your country, as parliaments are not NGOs, but are anchored in legislation.*

For more information, see the *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*.



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