



A Path To Democracy

From Engagement To Impact

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE, 23/11/2023



In democracies around the world, we are witnessing an alarming surge in disengagement and discontent in democratic bodies – paving the way for dangerous authoritarian factions. As a consequence, citizens are feeling excluded from democratic policymaking with their **needs not being met, voices not being heard and impact not being felt**.

The **IYTT's 5th International Youth Conference**, titled **“From Engagement to Impact: Voicing Needs for Trust in Democracy”**, aims at bridging the gap between theory and practice through discussions with one another, as well as on the streets of Barcelona.

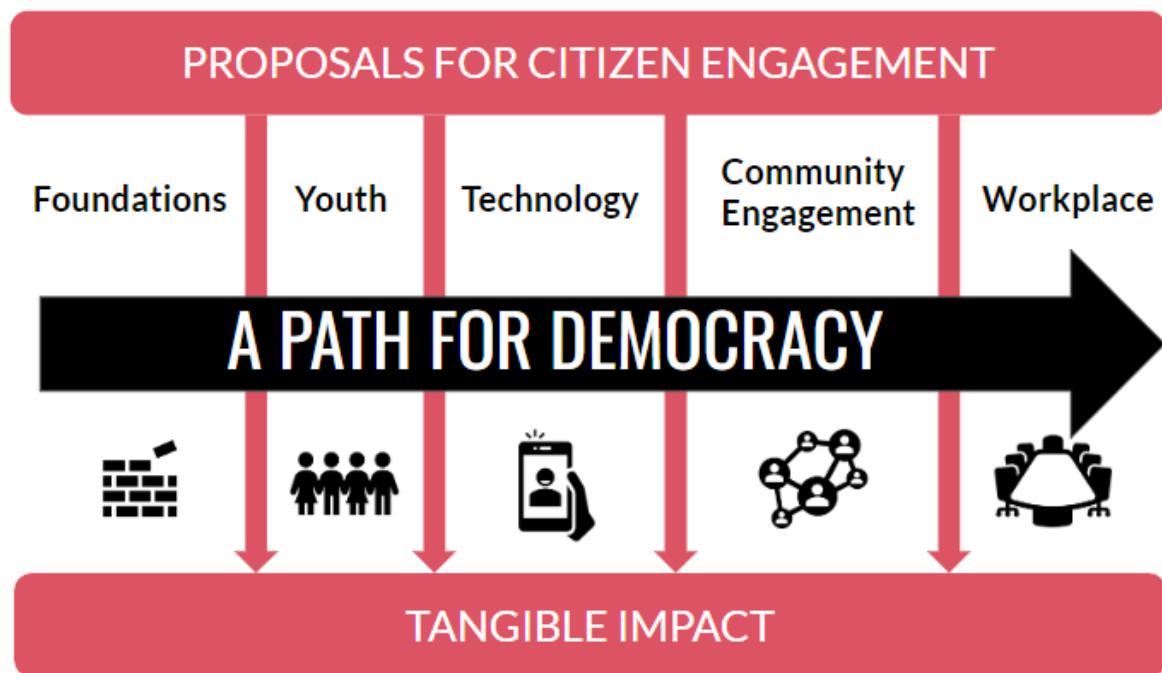
We aim to empower communities, influence policymakers and nurture democratic governance at a local, national and global level.

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We have created a path for democracy encompassing :

Foundations include ground proposals that point to the core of democratic processes. Frequently, anti-democratic forces exploit structures to seize or maintain power and suppress potential opposition. For all efforts of improvement to be effective, we first need to establish democratic bases for human rights to be respected.

Youth is the foundation of a sustainable democratic community. Through an emphasis on theoretical as well as practical democratic education, we want to ensure that young people are included and want to engage in democratic processes.

Technology tackles the increasing

importance of social media regulation and the role algorithms play in forming public opinion. Through incorporating Artificial Intelligence and fostering digital platforms, we want to facilitate dialogue as well as critical thinking regarding democracy.

Community Engagement addresses the transition between a responsible use of technological platforms and democratic civic participation. In order to strengthen an active civic society, we aim at channeling the potential of technology within the proposals.

Workplace encourages public and private employees in political engagement. Our proposals aim to use non-formal methodologies to overcome these barriers.

#1 SUPERVISE HUMAN RIGHTS IN ELECTIONS

PROPOSAL

- Supervising Procedure in the Human Rights Council
- Monitoring electoral campaigns
- “Does the content align with the international law of human rights?”



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Our proposal aims to supervise human rights during elections.

We want a new committee, namely a **Supervising Procedure**, added to the already existing entities within the **Human Rights Council of the United Nations**.

It will be triggered by any **national election** taking place. The task is to monitor electoral campaigns based on the question “Does the content of these campaigns align with the international law of human rights?”

The results of this supervision are made public through a report.

international law of human rights will be “flagged” by the committee.

From there on, it is up to the individual country to decide on potential measures and up to the international community to decide what to make of this information.

The committee itself does not issue any binding results.

Manifest violations of the

#2 EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE AND BY EDUCATION

PROPOSAL

- Popular jury-elected panel of jurists
- Experts by experience and education working with the government
- Full-time job role for equity



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Looking at a community level, we propose a policy for experts by experience and experts by education to work in partnership with policy writers, members of parliament, and local councils.

An **expert by experience** has gained their expertise through lived experiences, whereas an **expert by education** has been taught their expertise.

The model can be transferred to all situations where decisions are being made to allow for this expertise to be heard.

There will be a job role posted looking for experts of specific topics.

Following up, a random jury within the field is created to vote for

which applicant should represent the community.

Finally, they will receive a full time job role. Experts will be responsible for community engagement, sharing their expertise, help writing policies and debating, but not for voting in parliament.

To ensure **transparency** and **accountability** to the community, decision-makers will respond to all points raised by the experts. The decisions that affect a population, all decisions, should be made in partnership with the community.

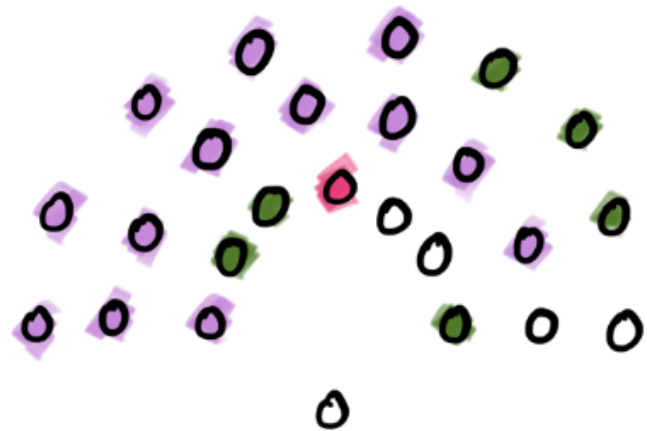
#3 QUOTAS FOR YOUTH IN THE PARLIAMENT

PROPOSAL

How?

- Legal candidate quotas
- Reserved seats

E.g: Gender Quotas, Kenya



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The current generation of youth is the largest in history. Nonetheless, this slice of the population is significantly underrepresented in parliaments, and thus is not taken into account in the policy-making process. This has led to a general disenchantment and feeling of distrust regarding the public institutions among young people.

To tackle the **underrepresentation and disengagement** of youth in politics, we propose implementing **Youth Quotas in Parliaments**.

This can be done through reserved seats or quotas in party lists.

This proposal is **inspired** by existing quotas in parliaments like youth quotas in Kenya and Gender Quotas in many countries of the world.

Acknowledging that young people are a heterogeneous group is key for the success of this initiative, and the circumstances and diversity within each country should be taken into account when designing the pertinent reforms.

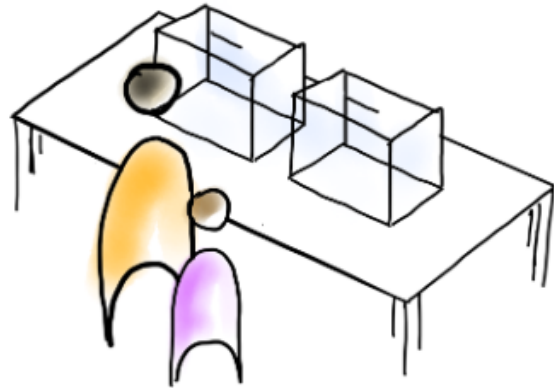
With the proposal, we aim to **boost youth voter turnout**, as well as address challenges that young people are facing nowadays like rising living costs, unaffordable housing, and unpaid internships.

Including youth perspectives through quotas can lead to more **forward-thinking and sustainable policies**, and could become a catalyzing force to render public institutions more inclusive, and, overall, strengthen democratization.

#4 JUNIOR ELECTIONS

PROPOSAL

- Separate junior elections are held at every election
- Encourage parents to participate and make voting a habit for kids
- Children see the results of the process



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Before getting youth into parliaments, they need to get involved at a very early age.

Not enough young people are interested in politics because they simply have no connection with it.

Our solution? **Junior Elections**. It's simple. Kids below the voting age can go with their parents on election day and vote exactly like in the real election. They get the real experience, from an invitation to go to the voting booth with educational material. They put their ballot in a separate box, their votes are not included in the real election.

This does two things: it makes **voting a habit from a young age**, and it gets them **asking questions**

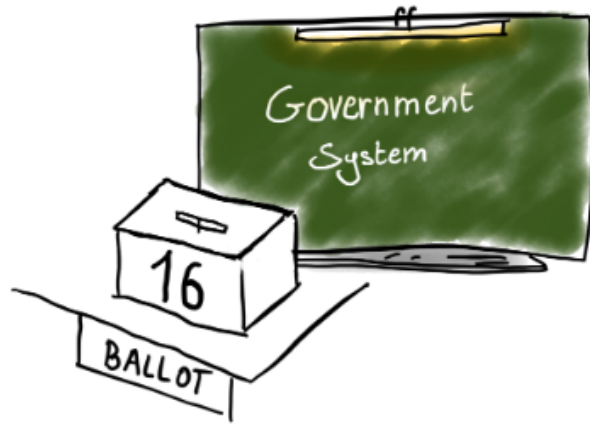
about democracy now, not just when they turn 18. That's learning by doing.

The result? We're going to see more of these kids voting when it counts as they grow up. Children will be the ones motivating their parents to go vote with them. That's how we **build a future with stronger voter turnout and a generation that really gets democracy**.

#5 LOWERING VOTING AGE TO 16 & EDUCATE YOUNG VOTERS

PROPOSAL

- Mandatory 'Government System' Education from primary school
- Lowering the voting age to 16



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Our next proposal is about **lowering the voting age and educating young voters**.

The proposal is based on the fact that voting age comes years after driving, criminal responsibility and working age. Voting age also comes after taxation age, meaning that youth work and pay taxes but are not entitled to vote.

By recognizing the political agency and awareness of younger generations, this reform acknowledges that individuals as young as 16 are actively engaged in civic life and possess a stake in the decisions that shape their future.

In the EU there could be a directive

that will set lowering voting age as an objective.

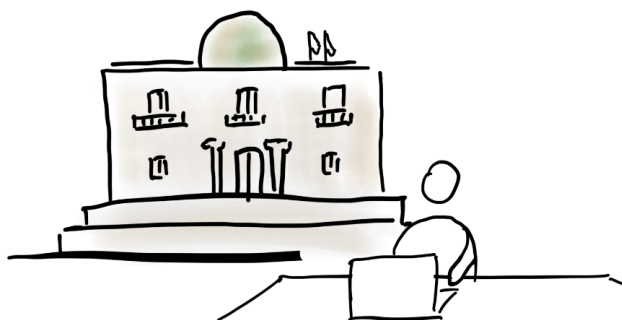
However, in order to guide the young voters and ensure that they have the proper knowledge to make informed choices when voting, the proposal includes **mandatory government system education**, starting from primary school onwards.

It will provide students with the necessary knowledge to make a change in the world, by understanding what democracy is, how the elections work, and why it is important for them to participate in political life.

#6 PUBLIC POSITIONS FOR YOUTH

PROPOSAL

- Open positions in public institutions
- 18-30 years old
- 5% - 10% of each department



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Youth are struggling to access job opportunities. The public sector is lacking youth experiences and competences.

In response to the evolving landscape of the workforce, and as recognition of the need for talent development, this proposal recommends the introduction of fair, junior paid positions within public institutions.

Therefore propose to integrate open positions within public institutions reserved for individuals aged 18 to 30. The proposal aims at having **5 to 10% youth representation in public sector departments**.

To make this come true, it must include fair pay and employment

agreements. Opening public positions for youth offers extensive benefits, enhancing workforce development by providing financial stability and nurturing talent and skills among recent graduates. These roles also contribute to **diversity and inclusion**, fostering a more inclusive work environment.

Additionally, junior positions introduce innovation, fresh perspectives, and adaptability, crucial in evolving workplaces, while improving community connections for better understanding and addressing community needs, ultimately enhancing services.

#7 “DEAR MAYOR” PROGRAM

PROPOSAL

- School workshops on political expression
- Letters to administrative and political bodies
- Pupils as a target population



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Young people are one of the pillars of a well-functioning democratic society.

The “**Dear Mayor**” Program aims to implement a supplementary **educational workshop program in schools** that focuses on teaching the pupils how to write official letters to the political and administrative bodies.

We invite experts trained to work with kids to inspire and empower the youngest population.

The children and young people learn how to channel complaints, concerns, and suggestions using various means, including digital technology, to the responsible bodies and be a part of a well-

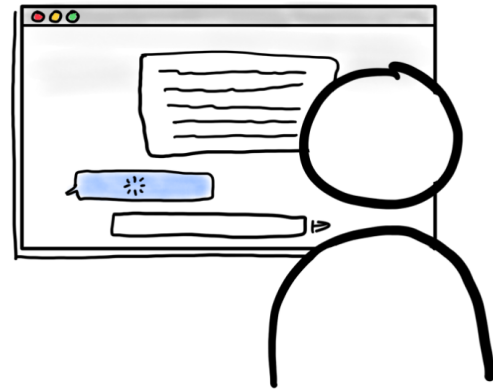
functioning democratic society from early on.

The idea can be implemented at either level, be it local, subnational, or national, starting from a single countryside school and ending with implementing it as a part of a wider curriculum.

#8 CITIZEN MAIL WEBSITE

PROPOSAL

- Website with multiple features and interfaces for youth and adults
- Letter to decision makers with AI-feedback
- Engage people in participating in decision making process



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A tool that can be used in the workshops is the **citizen mail website**, which re-connects citizens to the policy-makers.

This interactive platform will provide a way of learning about politics through practical participation. The mayor's mailbox function will be the heart of the website where citizens can post informal requests of change they want to see in their community.

AI-functions provide them with the knowledge background about general democratic processes, their rights and the competencies of governments on the different levels.

At the same time, AI will make it easier for parties, governments and administrations to access citizen requests and create the wanted change in their community.

The website helps to **restore trust in the democratic process** through **active participation and learning**.

#9 CONTENT RECOMMENDATION REGULATION

PROPOSAL

- Content recommendations on social media NOT solely based on personalization



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As democratic tools are moving to the digital space, we propose a content recommendation regulation.

Today, social media is the most used information source for young people, yet the content is barely regulated. The algorithms are based on personalization and therefore create polarisation and echo chambers.

This proposal suggests enforcing a law that **regulates the amount of non-personalized content** to be shown on social media apps. The aim is to broaden the horizon of users as well as **promote critical thinking**.

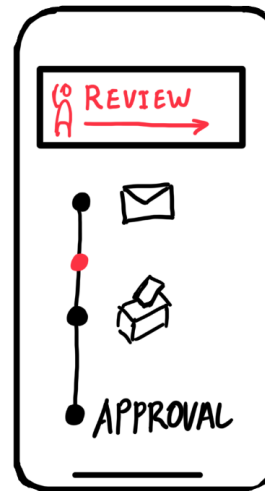
For example, this will be done by

regulating that at least 5% of your recommended content on social media apps should NOT be based on your personal preferences.

#10 *DemocracyLive* - A POLICY TRACKING APP

PROPOSAL

- Civic engagement through citizen polls
- Citizens priorities informing political agenda
- Updates on **policy status**



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In reference to the regulation proposal, we propose to involve citizens in the democratic process by introducing the Democracy Live policy-tracking app.

The app will send out **polls to citizens** periodically, which will be **fast tracked** in the working agenda of the relevant governing bodies.

The policy tracker then provides **live updates** of the progress of the policies, similarly to how one would receive notifications from a food delivery.

This app would enforce **accountability for governing bodies** by making policy-making

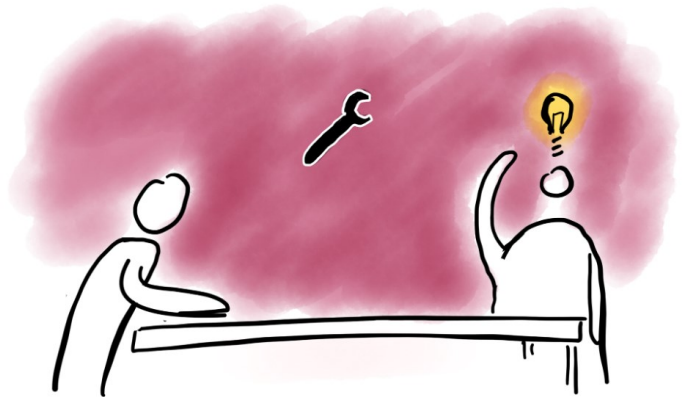
transparent, ensuring that the citizens' needs are prioritised.

The app will streamline citizen **engagement** and enhance the **effectiveness** of democracy.

11 PUBLIC SECTOR CO-CREATION SPACE

PROPOSAL

- Public Sector Hackathon
- Generate creative ideas
- One issue, multiple solutions, best ones implemented
- Bureaucrat incentivization



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The public sector, especially civil servants, find themselves disconnected from the population and political agency.

With the proposal of a **public sector co-creation space**, we aim to bridge the gap between public sector employees and society.

This will foster a sense of citizenship among bureaucrats and promote a **dialogue with the citizens**.

A third party, such as an NGO, organises the co-creation space, similar to a Hackathon. It will foster collaboration among the participants in a **condensed time frame**.

Participants will be asked to **solve a burning issue**, with the most effective and creative solution implemented in the end.

The proposal of a co-creation space will incentivize bureaucrats to feel more connected to the public and recognize the impact of their role in democracy.

#12 DEMOCRATIC WORLD CAFE

PROPOSAL

- Non-formal political engagement for private sector
- Discuss, document, and analyze
- Team building activity



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We close the proposals with the Democratic World Cafes. On this proposal, we shift the attention to a stakeholder who is often overlooked when we talk about democracy albeit their influence — the **private sector**.

We are not imposing political opinions on the private sector, yet offering an **informal space** for private sector employees.

The Democratic World Cafes are organised as **collaborative group discussions**.

The participants engage in rounds of rotating **small-group conversations** with public sector or NGO representatives, and the discussion will be focused on specific **social and political topics**.

Democracy is about everyone, and the private sector will not be left out.

That is why Democratic World Cafes offer a way through to **political engagement**, agency and **team-building** among peers, co-workers and public institutions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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/ PUBLICATIONS / "IYTT PRELIMINARY REPORT 2023"

It is possible to find a more detailed version of the proposals in the preliminary report on our website - scan the QR code above or go to <https://iythinktank.com/> -> **Publications** -> **IYC 2023 Preliminary Report**.

These 12 proposals will be incorporated into the overarching "Handbook for Innovative Democracy". This third edition captures the combined effort of 24 young people coming from 12 different countries challenging rising antidemocratic sentiment.

We hope this is the first step in taking the right path towards an inclusive and peaceful democracy and we invite you to join us!

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