

Press Release

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MORE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR YOUNG MOBILE EUROPEANS

Young, mobile EU citizens live, work and study in EU host countries, but are often unaware of their democratic rights and opportunities for political participation. They are part of the population but remain unnoticed by politics and society.

These are the core results of the two-year EU project "Empowerment of European Mobile Youth in the EU". A series of recommendations is now intended to counteract these developments of the marginal voter turnout in EU and local elections as well as the information deficit regarding Union rights, and to encourage European Mobile Youth (EMYs) to participate in politics.

EMY is an EU co-funded project that aims to inform young mobile European citizens aged 16-29 in the EU about their rights as EU citizens and to motivate them to make better use of their democratic rights and opportunities for political participation in a united Europe. Mobile European youth includes young people who live, work or study in another member state - the so-called host country. For this purpose, EMYs from the two participating project countries Estonia and Austria were interviewed during a two-year research period. The aim was to find out what they know about political participation in their host country and what expectations they have of the European Union in this regard.

The final conference, which will take place online on 21 January 2021, will present the results of the project, which was co-funded by the EU. During the project, interviews and surveys were conducted with focus groups, stakeholders, and decision-makers from both project countries. Based on the analysis of these contributions, the EMY project team drafted a set of recommendations for national and EU policy makers. In addition, a networked community of young mobile Europeans was established and an online tool, emyConnect, was developed to promote and facilitate democratic engagement of young EU citizens. One of the focal points of the EMY final conference will be a look into the future and beyond the end of the project to explore how mobility in the EU will develop after COVID-19 and, in particular, how the fundamental rights of EU citizens will be strengthened, so that mobile citizens can make their voices heard .

The event is open to stakeholders, the EMY network and the interested public. Participation is free of charge. Registrations are possible online at <https://europeanmobileyouth.eu/registration>. The conference programme can be found here: <https://europeanmobileyouth.eu/conference>

Results and details from the surveys and focus groups:

Before and after the European Parliament elections in May 2019, mobile young people in their host countries Austria and Estonia were asked about their interest in politics, their awareness of their democratic rights and their democratic participation. It was investigated whether the young people had made use of their right to vote. If they had not, they were asked specifically what had prevented them from participating in the democratic process in their EU host country.

The most important findings are summarised by the following categories:

- Political apathy
The working hypothesis that young EU citizens, especially those who are mobile, would be politically disinterested and therefore not vote has not been confirmed. The post-election survey showed that there was an above-average participation of 71% in the 2019 European elections and the majority (77%) followed the election campaign for the European Parliament. Not to be underestimated is the scepticism about the effectiveness of democratic participation, which more than half of them expressed.
- Tendency towards the homeland
During the project, clear political tendencies towards the homeland could be identified. The pre-election survey showed that the vast majority would vote for a candidate or party in their home country. The post-election survey showed that one third of respondents did not even know that they had the right to vote in the elections in their host country. Respondents' ignorance of their democratic rights as EU citizens is particularly evident in their attitudes towards local elections. Almost half of the respondents were unaware of their right to vote in local elections in their host country.
- Information and communication deficit
During the project, communication deficits were repeatedly identified among EMYs. This was due to a lack of knowledge about EU citizenship or about the political and social environment in the host country. Information deficits continue to be a hurdle to democratic participation.

Language barriers continue to be a major and important obstacle to communication. There was a general agreement that important information should be provided in multilingual formats.
- Administrative barriers
EMYs continue to face bureaucratic obstacles. 15% of respondents alone said they wanted to vote in the EU elections but had not been informed in time or that there were problems with registration. The three main hurdles are the member states' criteria for the right to stand and vote, the lengthy administrative procedure for voter registration and the voting process itself.

A larger and more detailed overview of the project's work and results can be found on the EMY website (<https://europeanmobileyouth.eu/outcomes>).

The project partners

The **AIT Austrian Institute of Technology** is Austria's largest non-university research institution and is the specialist among European research institutions for the central infrastructure topics of the future. At the Center for Digital Safety & Security, modern information and communication technologies and systems are developed to make critical infrastructures secure and reliable in the context of comprehensive and global networking and digitalisation. AIT is acting as consortium leader in this project.

www.ait.ac.at

The **E-Governance Academie (EGA)** is a non-governmental, non-partisan organisation based in Estonia, established to create, and share knowledge on e-governance, e-democracy, and civil society development. EGA is a joint initiative of the Estonian government, the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established in 2002.

www.ega.ee

The **Centre of Economics and Public Administration (CEPA)** is a network of internationally recognised experts in public administration, political science, economics and finance, and information technology. CEPA was launched in the UK in 2015 with the aim of exploring the complex interactions between science, politics, and civil society. In 2019, the Vienna branch of CEPA was established.

www.cepanet.eu

Politikos aims to establish an efficient communication method between policy makers and civil society. In this way, innovative ideas, and approaches for policy-making are developed in order to give all people the opportunity to get involved in political decision-making processes and to actively participate in shaping them.

www.politikos.at

Project data

Project: Empowerment of mobile youth in the EU (EMY)

Project ID: REC-RCIT-CITI-AG-2018

Countries involved: Estonia, Austria

Project start: 1.2.2019

Project end: 31.1.2021

Webpage: <https://europeanmobileyouth.eu>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/europeanmobileyouth>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/europeanmobileyouth>

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