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Lectori salutem!

The second issue of *Youth and Generation Studies* features three scholarly articles, two conference reports and a book recommendation.

Chiao Li examines trends in youth political participation across Europe in his article "Youth Mobilisation in European Politics: Understanding the Rising Participation Trend in European Parliament Elections among Younger Generations". Research on electoral behavior highlights that youth voter turnout is often higher in transnational elections, such as those for the European Parliament. However, our understanding of the underlying factors remains limited. Li's study addresses this gap by exploring demand-side explanations for the increased electoral engagement of younger generations in European elections.

Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar's study aims to interpret the potential effects on voting preferences that premature campaigning has in the Philippines. Aguilar employs a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data and interviews to explore generational attitudes toward early campaigning. Campaigning prior to the official designated period is illegal in the Philippines, making the study particularly relevant as premature campaigning still remains a widespread and persuasive practice.

Leanid Marozau's research identifies the policy requirements necessary for establishing a legal framework for youth rights at international and European levels. The primary research question concerns the legal capacity of youth and the types of political participation and frameworks required to institutionalise youth rights within existing human rights protocols. Using qualitative methods, Marozau analyses policy documents, legislation, strategic plans, and other relevant legal and political materials to highlight challenges and perspectives in youth rights representation.

Paul Moran authored a report on the "Emerging Voices: Perspectives from the Next Generation of Scholars in Youth Research" conference organised by the Youth Research Institute in Budapest. This gathering, which aims to become an annual tradition, brought together young scholars from Europe, Asia,

South America, and Africa to discuss timely topics, including artificial intelligence, education, political activism, and mental health issues affecting youth.

Dóra Bugár and Rebeka Tótszegi provided an account of the Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), one of the most prestigious international conferences in youth research. First held in 1994, the NYRIS conference took place for the 16th time this year in Tampere, Finland. Over the course of three days, researchers from around the world shared and discussed their latest findings on the state of young people.

Ágnes Réka Dusa penned a recommendation of the intriguing book "Twin Studies in Social Science". While this area is typically dominated by biomedical analyses, the 2023 publication takes a fresh approach by examining twins as a social phenomenon, filling a significant gap in the literature.

Happy reading!

Levente Székely
Editor-in-Chief

Youth Mobilisation in European Politics: Understanding the Rising Participation Trend in European Parliament Elections among Younger Generations

Chiao Li¹

The 2019 European Parliament (EP) election significantly departed from its downward turnout trend. Immediate analysis has partly credited the turnout to rising youth participation among younger generations. However, our understanding of the factors driving the surge in youth turnout in supranational elections remains limited. This paper addresses this gap by examining demand-side explanations of the rise in turnout among younger generations in European elections, employing hierarchical age period cohort (HAPC) models on repeated cross-sectional surveys, including the European Election Studies and the Eurobarometer over decades in 15 Western European democracies. It shows evidence that younger cohorts are more likely to participate in European elections than their generational counterparts partly because of more favourable attitudes and perceptions of the EU and EP elections. In contrast, exposure to the EP electoral campaign hardly explains increased youth participation among younger generations. These findings provide a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of political activism in the context of multilevel governance structures and challenge the applicability of the second-order election model to voting behaviour in EP elections among younger citizens.

Keywords: turnout, European Parliament elections, generations, voting behaviour, youth

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1. Introduction

The 2019 European Parliament (EP) election witnessed the highest participation level in the past two decades, revealing a first-time reversal of its downward turnout trend. This positive momentum carried into the 2024 EP election, which saw a further, albeit slight, increase in voter turnout. The overall increase in turnout at the EP elections departed from scholarly expectations based on demographic shifts (Dinas 2012, 2013; Franklin et al. 2004; Grasso 2016; Kostelka & Blais 2021; Smets & Neundorf 2014) and structural factors (De Sio et al., 2019:62). Immediate analysis of the 2019 EP election has partly attributed its increased turnout to rising participation among younger citizens (Becewe et al., 2019). Recent studies have suggested the role of the increased salience of European issues in public debates (Braun, 2021) and the mobilising effects of transnational policy issues (Braun & Schäfer, 2022).

Whereas our understanding of the factors driving or impeding citizens' engagement in elections is extensive (Smets & van Ham, 2013), we know little about the reasons behind the recent surge in youth turnout in supranational elections. To date, few studies have attempted to

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unpack the factors accounting for increased political activism among younger cohorts in European elections. The reasons driving the unexpected increase in turnout among younger citizens in EP elections remain a subject of inquiry. It prompts the question: Where did the increased turnout in EP elections among younger generations come from (Becewe et al., 2019) when younger cohorts are less inclined to participate in national elections partly due to a diminished sense of civic duty and political engagement (Blais et al., 2004; Blais & Rubenson, 2013; Dalton, 2009)?

This paper fills this void by examining multiple explanations of the surge in turnout among younger generations in European elections, emphasising demand-side changes related to shifting voter characteristics across various generations. It employs hierarchical age period cohort (HAPC) models to identify reasons behind the rising youth participation in supranational elections. Using repeated cross-sectional and cross-national surveys, including the European Election Studies and the Eurobarometer over decades in 15 Western European democracies, it shows evidence that younger cohorts are more likely to participate in European elections than their generational counterparts partly because of a greater sense of European identity, increased political efficacy in EU politics, and perceived importance of electoral results in EP elections. In contrast, factors related to support for EU membership, trust in EU institutions, exposure to EP electoral campaigns, and perceived EU competence explain little rising participation among younger generations.

The emergence of EU-related factors as key drivers of youth turnout in European elections undermines the applicability of the second-order election (SOE) model to voting behaviour in EP elections among young citizens. It provides an updated understanding of the evolving nature of political activism in the context of multilevel governance structures. In addition, amidst the backdrop of the 2024 election campaigns, discerning why younger individuals exhibit a greater inclination to engage in supranational contexts holds immediate relevance. These insights are pivotal for informing strategies aimed at enhancing youth political participation, strengthening democratic legitimacy, and fostering a more inclusive European policy.

This article commences by reviewing existing literature on turnout variations across cohorts. Following this, it delineates the theoretical framework and hypotheses proposing changes in voter characteristics among younger generations. Subsequently, it presents the data and method used. The results section analyses demand-side factors contributing to increased participation among younger cohorts in EP elections. Finally, it concludes by discussing the findings and their implications for the ongoing electoral landscape in supranational contexts.

2. Generational turnout disparities: Insights and explanations

The decrease in voter participation had been a dominant pattern in advanced democracies in the latter part of the 20th century, influencing both national elections (Gray & Caul, 2000) and EP elections (Flickinger & Studlar, 2007). Existing research has shown that turnout disparities across cohorts contribute to shaping the overall turnout trends over time, as these variations influence the aggregate turnout pattern through the gradual process of generational replacement (Franklin, 2004).

Prior research had discerned a preoccupying generational trend in electoral engagement, revealing a lower voting inclination among post-baby boomers. Analyses on pooled surveys of national elections in the United States, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Germany confirm this negative trend (Blais et al., 2004; Franklin, 2004; Gallego, 2009; Konzelmann et al., 2012; Wass, 2007). A marked discrepancy in turnout levels was also identified between pre- and post-baby boomers in previous EP elections from 1979 to 2009 across 11 EU member states (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012).

Scholars have been keen to pinpoint the reasons behind cohort variations in turnout. The investigation has been approached from demand-side analyses centring on changing voter characteristics or supply-side explanations highlighting shifting election characteristics. On the one hand, younger generations may exhibit varying levels of electoral participation because of distinct attributes, such as differing levels of political interest, compared to previous generations; on the other hand, varying turnout levels may be related to changes in factors associated with voting incentives, such as the competitiveness and significance of elections.

Regarding changes in voter traits across generations, Blais et al. (2004) suggest that the significant decline in turnout among post-baby boomers in Canada from 1969 to 2000 is associated with a diminished sense of civic duty and reduced political engagement, including less attention paid to political matters in media consumption, decreased political interest, and lower levels of political knowledge. In addition, using repeated cross-sectional surveys and panel data in the United States, Blais & Rubenson (2013) find evidence that decreased turnout in presidential elections among recent generations is explained by their weaker sense of duty and political efficacy. Furthermore, Fieldhouse et al. (2007) find evidence from the 2002-2003 European Social Survey that young people are less likely to participate in national elections across Europe, in part due to decreased group affiliations, institutional distrust, and weakened partisan allegiance.

Regarding changes in election characteristics, Persson et al. (2013), using the Swedish national election study from 1960 to 2010, find that the declining percentage of party membership in the electorate and increasing number of parties competing for votes over time are linked to lower turnout among younger generations. Furthermore, Smets & Neundorff (2014) demonstrate how cohorts socialised in a highly politicised environment during their formative years exhibit a greater inclination to participate in voting, irrespective of age or temporal influences. They provide evidence from the US General Social Survey spanning 1972 to 2010 that overall turnout rates and party polarisation during cohorts' initial two elections partially account for turnout disparities among various generations.

Yet, in light of the observed rise in turnout among younger generations in recent EP elections (Becewe et al., 2019), a crucial question arises: Why do younger cohorts demonstrate rising voting levels in EP elections compared to their generational counterparts? Surprisingly, studies have been scarce in identifying the reasons behind cohort variations in turnout in supranational elections. Understanding the reasons behind increased electoral participation among the youth in supranational elections holds theoretical and social relevance.

EP elections have been regarded as second-order arenas fought under the shadows of national dynamics since their first appearance in 1979 (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). Although scholars still dispute the second-order character of contemporary EP elections (Schäfer, 2021; Schmitt et al.,

2020), the SOE model remains one of the dominant approaches to understanding voting behaviours in supranational elections. It continues to provide consistent explanations of aggregate electoral results in EP elections across EU member states (Hix & Marsh, 2011; Schmitt & Toygür, 2016). Whereas the SOE model posits that turnout decisions in these second-order elections have little to do with the European polity itself, EU-related factors have recently found increasing evidence in voting decisions in EP elections (Braun, 2021; Hobolt & Spoon, 2012; Schäfer & Debus, 2018). Suppose the increasing turnout in EP elections results from more positive attitudes and perceptions of the EU and EP elections among younger generations. In that case, it further questions the applicability of the SOE model to youth voting behaviours in these elections.

Additionally, young people represent the future of democracy. Their engagement in EP elections not only impacts the current political landscape but also shapes the trajectory of democracy in the long term. Understanding the factors driving their participation can inform policymakers in formulating strategies to cultivate electoral involvement in the context of multilevel governance structures.

3. Theoretical framework and hypothesis

Generational differences in attitudes and behaviours are attributed to the shifting socio-historical contexts to which individuals are exposed during their formative years. The theoretical framework is twofold. First, in terms of timing, late adolescence to early adulthood is considered a crucial period when political beliefs and opinions are formed, challenged, and solidified; in contrast, later life stages typically see a significant increase in attitudinal stability (Dinas, 2013). Second, regarding causes, generational effects are associated with varying contexts of political socialisation, leading to the crystallisation of different values, attitudes, and behaviours among cohorts. Differences across generations may result directly from specific socio-historical events (Mannheim, 1928), such as the student protests of 1968, which fostered political activism among those coming of age in Western Europe (Grasso, 2016). These differences can also emerge from broader social transformations during citizens' formative years (Inglehart, 1977). For instance, Kostelka & Blais (2021) demonstrate that affluent conditions in post-industrial societies have led to lower voter turnout among those who came of age during this period.

Once politically socialised, individuals tend to maintain consistent voting patterns, which can be seen as forming voting habits (Dinas, 2012) or reflecting stable attitudes (Kostelka & Blais, 2021). Although all cohorts at a given time experience similar political contexts shaped by socio-historical events, the degree of exposure varies. While such changes add layers to existing attitudes and habits among older citizens, they may leave a lasting impression on younger individuals without prior experience (Dinas, 2013). The significant impact of political socialisation during formative years on voting behaviour is supported by empirical evidence. For example, elections of low salience have been shown to lead to low turnout among the young, as early electoral experiences shape voting and non-voting habits (Dinas, 2012; Franklin et al., 2004; Smets & Neundorf, 2014).

Building on the theory of political socialisation, differences in socialisation experiences regarding the EU and the EP elections are posited as the primary source driving generational

variations in attitudes and behaviours in supranational elections. While earlier cohorts had been socialised in an era when the EU and EP elections held minor significance, the socialisation contexts in which younger generations come of age appear markedly different. In earlier EP elections, it was observed that 'those who participated went to the polls just because they are used to doing so on election day' (Schmitt & Mannheimer, 1991:31). The decisions to vote in European elections had little to do with choosing representatives at the EU level. Previous studies have indicated that citizens are less inclined to participate in European elections due to a variety of demobilising factors, such as apathy towards EU politics, Eurosceptic attitudes, perception of the low significance of EP elections, and distrust in EU institutions (Clark, 2014; Schäfer, 2021; Stockemer & Blais, 2019).

Whereas scholars continue to debate the second-order character of present-day EP elections (Hix & Marsh, 2007; Schäfer, 2021), there is widespread agreement that the EU and its parliament underwent significant transformations at the turn of the 21st century (Hix & Marsh, 2011; Schmitt, 2005; Studlar et al., 2003). The expanded reach of the EU and the increased significance of European issues in recent decades have arguably resulted in a more favourable socialisation environment fostering positive attitudes and perceptions towards both the EU and EP elections among younger generations.

The policy scope of the EU expanded significantly as younger generations reached adulthood amidst the shift to the 2000s. In contrast to the European Coal and Steel Community established in 1952, studies indicate that by the 1990s, Brussels had become the primary producer of significant legislation, surpassing any other national capital (Schmitt, 2005). The Maastricht Treaty notably enhanced the opportunity to live, work, and study in different member states compared to previous conditions, formally ensuring the freedom of labour movement within the EU (Down & Wilson, 2013). Several successive EU treaties, including those of Amsterdam, Nice, and Lisbon, were additionally enacted in the post-Maastricht era, with the establishment of the European Central Bank in 1998 and the introduction of the euro in 1999 marking significant milestones.

Consider the contrasting socialisation experiences a French citizen would have had with the EU during the 1960s and the 1990s. A person reaching adulthood in the 1960s encountered the early stages of the EU, then known as the European Economic Community (EEC). Integration efforts at that time were underway, but the process was still in its infancy, lacking clear symbols of unity and broader territorial reach. While freedom of movement within the EEC was gradually developing, it was not as extensive as in later years. In contrast, an individual coming of age in the 1990s was socialised with a European polity where major institutions and frameworks were established, enjoying tangible benefits such as unrestricted travel, work, and residency across dozens of EU member states. This era also witnessed the emergence of prominent symbols of European identity, including the EU flag, euro currency, passports, and driving licenses, fostering a more profound sense of belonging to a broader European community.

Moreover, the widened policy reach of the EU, coupled with the increased salience of European integration, has arguably contributed to the increased significance and Europeanisation of EP elections during the formative years of younger cohorts. Initially characterised as a 'sleeping giant' capable of inciting public debates in the late 1990s (Franklin & van der Eijk, 1996), the issue of European integration no longer fosters permissive consensus but instead constrains dissensus (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). The salience of European issues has grown throughout a series of EU-

related crises, such as the European sovereign debt crisis emerging in 2008 and the migration crisis peaking in 2015 (Hooghe & Marks 2018; Otjes & Katsanidou 2017). Additionally, the news coverage of the 2009 EP election witnessed an exponential increase in its visibility and Europeanness across EU member states (Schuck et al., 2011), contrasting poor media coverage of previous EP elections (De Vreese et al., 2006).

Research on generational differences in attitudes towards the EU underscores several evolving voter characteristics among younger cohorts. Down & Wilson (2013, 2017) show that individuals socialised after the 1970s exhibited mounting support for the EU membership, growing trust in EU institutions, rising regret for EU dissolution, and increasing agreement for the unification process. Moreover, when asked about their motivations for turnout and party choice in the 2019 EP election, younger respondents are demonstrated to be more inclined to attribute their participation to a desire for change and a sense of European identity; additionally, their party preferences show a higher susceptibility to party positions on European issues and the EP electoral campaign (Becewe et al., 2019).

Extensive research on electoral participation has identified various theories and rationales accounting for turnout variations across individuals (Smets & van Ham, 2013), which can inform the development of possible explanations for increased participation among younger generations in supranational elections. The civic voluntarism model, stemming from the standard socioeconomic model (SES), stands out as a prominent framework for understanding political participation in general. It underscores the significance of resources such as time, money, and civic skills in shaping political engagement (Verba et al., 1995). Yet, the civic voluntarism model expands beyond resource-based explanations for non-participation, suggesting that individuals may also refrain from political involvement due to a lack of psychological engagement with politics (García-Albacete, 2014:58). Drawing insights from this model, the increase in turnout levels in EP elections among younger cohorts may be attributed to positive attitudes towards the EU. These cognitive characteristics may include political efficacy, trust in institutions and personal preferences linked to expressive voting (Smets & van Ham, 2013).

H1: Positive attitudes towards the EU partly explain the increased probability of voting in EP elections among younger cohorts.

In addition, the rational choice model underscores the idea that voting entails a cost-benefit analysis, where the perceived benefits of voting should exceed the associated costs to motivate an individual to participate in elections (Downs, 1957; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). A prevalent explanation for the lower turnout rates in EP elections compared to national elections is the general public's lack of interest in EU politics (Clark, 2014). European elections may have been regarded as 'low-salience competitions' (Hix & Marsh, 2011; Schmitt, 2005) because, in the earlier phases of European integration, it was the national governments, rather than the European Parliament, that made the majority or all of the political decisions within the EU. Furthermore, Moravcsik (2002) contends that the EU primarily handles tasks of minimal interest to the public (such as central banking and technical administration); in contrast, matters of high significance (such as healthcare, education, law enforcement, pension and social security policy, and taxation) are mainly dealt with at the national level. The EU and its parliament are thus seen as having trivial significance. If European citizens perceive that the outcome of supranational elections will have little or no immediate impact

on their lives, they are less likely to feel motivated to participate. I thus expect that the increased turnout among younger cohorts may be explained by more favourable perceptions of the EU and the EP elections.

H2: Favourable perceptions of the EU and the EP elections partly explain the increased probability of voting in EP elections among younger cohorts.

Lastly, according to the mobilisation model of voter turnout, the concept revolves around citizens being encouraged by parties, candidates, interest groups, and emerging social movements to engage in politics (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). These social networks lower the barriers to political participation by offering information about parties, candidates, and electoral procedures. I thus hypothesise that younger cohorts are more likely to participate in EP elections partly because of greater exposure to the European election campaign.

H3: Greater exposure to the European election campaign partly explains the increased probability of voting in EP elections among younger cohorts.

4. Data and methods

This study employs data from repeated waves of post-electoral surveys on EP elections, including the European Election Studies (EES) and the Eurobarometer (EB). The empirical analysis is performed on two combined datasets: one dataset harmonises data from the EES 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019, encompassing electoral participation in EP elections over two decades, while the other dataset combines data from the Flash EB 62, the EB 71.3, the EES 2014, and the EB 91.5, covering the EP elections from 2004 to 2019 (see Appendix Table 1 for comparison of data sources). Statistical models include survey-fixed effects to control for potential differences in survey design, sampling procedures, and data collection methods.

These EES and EB post-electoral surveys stand as pivotal resources for understanding citizens' electoral behaviour in supranational elections across EU member states while offering valuable information on public opinion and attitudes towards the EU and its institutions over time. The EES primarily focus on EP elections, providing detailed snapshots of voting behaviour during these electoral cycles; the EB covers a broader range of topics beyond elections, including public opinion on various EU policies, institutions, and social issues. The joint use of these two data sources allows for a more comprehensive examination of EU-specific factors, ranging from aspects such as the European election campaign to attitudes and perceptions regarding the EU and EP elections.

I utilise logistic regression models given that the dependent variable, turnout, is binary. Yet, self-reported turnout in these surveys typically suffers from over-reported participation due to social desirability bias. In other words, people tend to overstate their participation in surveys, especially when turnout rates are high, to appear more civic-minded or engaged than they actually are. However, the concern of overreporting is considered less critical in this study as the primary objective is not to interpret the turnout levels in absolute terms; instead, it aims to compare how including additional explanatory variables, accounting for varying cohort characteristics, affects the

estimation of relative cohort-level variance in turnout in EP elections.²

The analysis focuses on 15 Western European democracies that joined the EU before its enlargement in 2004. Previously grouped as the EU-15, these countries include Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom (withdrew from the EU in 2020), and Sweden. Countries from Central and Eastern Europe are not included in the analysis due to significant variations in turnout patterns in EP elections within this region compared to member states in Western Europe (Flickinger & Studlar, 2007).

This study employs a so-called age-period-cohort (APC) analysis to examine various demand-side explanations that may account for the increased turnout among younger generations in EP elections in Western Europe. Yet, as three temporal effects—age, period, and generation—are linearly interdependent (cohort = period - age), generational differences are hardly identifiable in statistical models without necessitating some theoretical assumptions regarding at least one of the three APC effects. The APC identification problem has prompted significant methodological discourse in recent decades, with several approaches suggested to address it (Smets & Neundorf, 2014).

The hierarchical age-period-cohort (HAPC) model, proposed by Yang & Land (2006, 2008), appears to be a potentially suitable modelling strategy for this study to disentangle the effects of age, period and cohort. This approach avoids the issue of multicollinearity between three temporal variables by modelling the effects of cohort and period as random effects, including random intercepts accounting for cross-classified grouping of observations. This strategy is particularly suited for analysis on repeated cross-sectional surveys, as each observation can be viewed as embedded within a contextual cohort and period unit. In addition, HAPC models allow for investigating the reasons behind differences between cohorts (or periods) (McLaren et al., 2021).

Similar to the modelling specification utilised in Down & Wilson (2013, 2017), I include random effects for cohort and country-year units as well as country-fixed effects to account for the dependencies within the data. Studies show that compulsory voting and other country-year-specific factors influence turnout decisions in EP elections (Franklin, 2001). These factors include the timing of EP elections relative to national elections, the turnout boost in first-time EP elections held in new member states, and the concurrence of significant domestic referendums with EP elections (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012). I include the continuous age variable and its squared term as fixed effects to control for the curvilinear impact of ageing on turnout observed in survey data (Smets & van Ham, 2013).

While determining the exact year cut-offs for dividing individuals into different cohorts can be somewhat arbitrary, I use a general classification commonly used in the literature (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012; Blais et al., 2004; Wass, 2007). This categorisation is based on general trends and events delineating different socialisation experiences between cohorts/ generations, extended from Bhatti & Hansen's (2012) study on generational differences in turnout at European elections. It is essential to clarify that this framework does not aim to classify 'political generations' in the sense

² The underlying assumption of logistic regression models is that variations in misreporting rates among different demographic groups remain consistent throughout the time period studied; potential bias in the results may occur if there are disparities in social desirability norms among different generations.

defined by Mannheim (1928).

Individuals are categorised into six broad cohorts/ generations: the Pre-war generation, the Baby-boomer generation, the 60s generation, the 70s generation, the 80s generation, and the 90/00s generation (see Table 1).³ The Pre-war generation, born before the end of WWII, entered early into the workforce, valued material security, and deeply considered voting as a civic duty. The Baby-boomer generation saw significant urbanisation and industrialisation, leading to improved living standards. The 60s generation, following the post-war reconstruction and early 1960s economic boom, experienced a relatively smoother life compared to earlier generations. The 70s generation grew up during the final stages of the Cold War and the rise of neoliberalism in Europe, characterised by pragmatism and increasing individualism (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012; Grasso, 2016).

The 80s generation witnessed increasing globalisation, spending most of their formative years during the post-Maastricht era, which saw substantial expansion in the EU's policy scope. The establishment of the European Central Bank in 1998 and the introduction of the euro in 1999 marked significant developments. The 90/00s generation experienced heightened attention to European issues in EP elections throughout a series of EU crises, including the 2008 sovereign debt crisis, the migrant crisis, and Brexit.

While some may advocate for classifications more tailored to specific contexts or countries, this general categorisation framework offers two key advantages. First, it allows for observing general trends in turnout among post-baby boomers while recognising the turnout disparities between pre- and post-baby boomers (Blais et al., 2004; Gallego, 2009; Konzelmann et al., 2012; Wass, 2007). Second, it facilitates a parsimonious comparison across EU member states, allowing the identification of pan-European development in EP elections in Western Europe.

Table 1. Categorisation of cohorts/ generations

	Pre-war	Baby - boomer	60s	70s	80s	90s/00s
Year of birth	- 1945	1946 - 1959	1960 - 1969	1970 - 1979	1980 - 1989	1990 -
Formative years	- 1963	1964 - 1977	1978 - 1987	1988 - 1997	1998 - 2007	2008 -

Compositional changes across cohorts in EU-related attitudes, perceptions, and exposure to the European election campaign are tested to investigate how varying voter characteristics may account for variations in turnout at the cohort level in EP elections. Regarding attitudes toward the EU and its institutions, I examine four aspects of attitudinal changes: support for EU membership, trust in EU institutions, European identity, and political efficacy in EU politics. Support for EU membership is assessed using the standard Eurobarometer question, which asks, *'Generally speaking, do you think that [country] membership of the European Union is..?'* Responses are coded as follows: *'Good thing'* = 1, *'Neither'* = 0, *'Bad thing'* = -1. Trust in EU institutions is measured by asking respondents whether they agree with the statement: *'You trust the institutions of the EU.'*⁴ European identity is assessed using

³ Although there is little agreement in the literature about the specific age at which political events imprint lasting impact on young adults (Smets & Neundorf, 2014; Grasso, 2014), an informative panel study conducted among Dutch adolescents and young adults indicates that the most influential period in shaping voting behaviour is around the age of 18 (Rekker et al., 2019).

⁴ Trust in EU institutions is the sole trust item consistently available in the post-electoral surveys of EP elections from 2004 to 2019.

two survey questions that inquire about respondents' attachment to Europe and their sense of feeling as citizens of the EU. Political efficacy in EU politics is measured by respondents' agreement with the following two statements: *'You had all the necessary information in order to choose who to vote for in the recent European elections'* and *'The European Parliament takes into consideration the concerns of European citizens.'*

In terms of perceptions of the EU and the EP elections, I include variables measuring perceived EU competence and the importance of EP results. Perceived EU competence is assessed via the most important issue question (MII), *'As of today, at which level do you think <the most important issue/ problem> is dealt with?'* Responses indicating 'European level' are coded 1, while all other responses (national/ regional levels or don't know) are coded 0. The importance of EP results is assessed through two questions inquiring whether candidate and party outcomes are important to respondents in supranational elections: *'It is very important for you which particular candidates have been elected as MEPs in the European Parliament elections in the [country]'* and *'It is very important for you to know which particular political party has the most MEPs in the European Parliament elections in the [country].'*

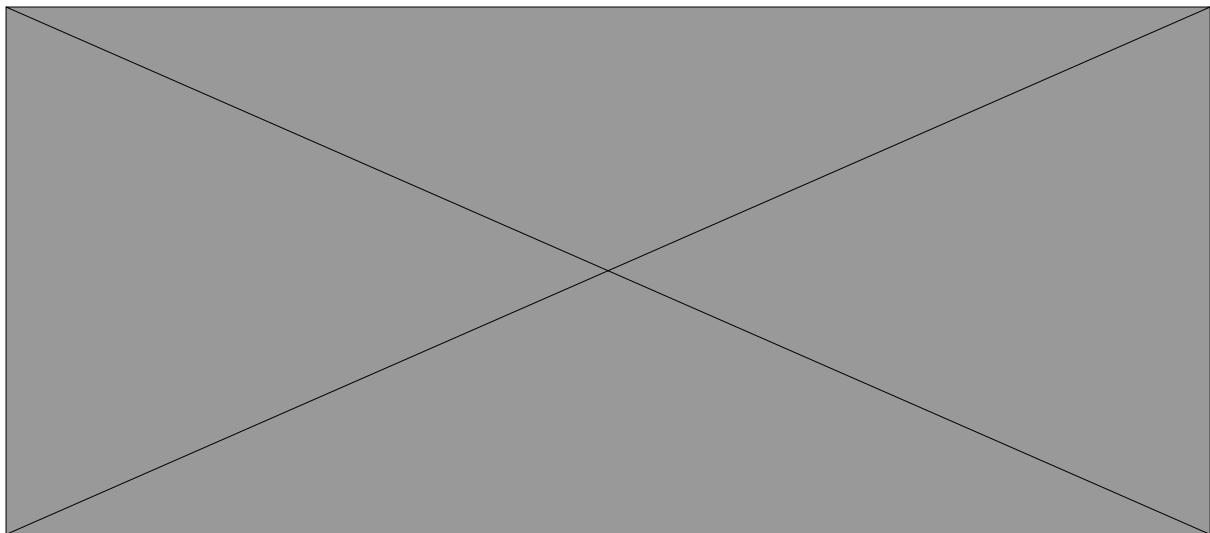
In terms of exposure to the European election campaign, I assess whether respondents have encountered campaigning efforts from the European Parliament and their level of media attention to the campaign preceding the EP elections. Exposure to the voting campaign is measured with the following question, *'Personally, do you remember having seen on TV, on the Internet or on posters, read in newspapers or heard on the radio messages from the European Parliament encouraging people to vote in the European Parliament elections?'* Media attention to the campaign is assessed through a question in the EES 2019 asking respondents to rate, on a scale from 0 to 10, *'How closely did you follow the campaign ahead of the European Parliament elections in the media or on social media?'* For earlier EP elections, this variable is measured through a sum index ranging from 0 to 10 via three EES items. Respondents in the EES 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 were asked the frequencies at which they *'watch a programme about the European elections on television'*, *'read about the European elections in a newspaper'* and *'read about the European elections on the Internet (websites, social media, etc.)'*. Responses indicating *'Often'* are assigned a value of 3.33, responses indicating *'Sometimes'* are assigned a value of 1.66, and responses indicating *'Never'* are assigned a value of 0 (see Appendix Table 2 and Appendix Table 3 for a summary of measures of explanatory variables).

Lastly, I include control variables accounting for the effects of compositional changes in social demography across generations, including gender, education, and occupational status. Party identification, union membership, religious attendance, and political interest are additionally controlled in the dataset combining the EES 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019, as these variables are not consistently available in the EB. While educational attainment and occupational status are linked to the resource model of electoral participation, party identification, union membership, and religious attendance are relevant to the mobilisation model (Smets & van Ham, 2013). All continuous independent variables are centred at the overall mean of the pooled data, aligning with the convention of HAPC models proposed by Yang & Land (2008). This approach enables the interpretation of random cohort effects as deviations from the grand mean.

5. Results

The HAPC models on two datasets of post-electoral surveys of EP elections point to an increasing likelihood of voting among younger generations in EP elections. Figure 1 plots the estimated random effects for cohorts on electoral participation in EP elections. It is observable that the 60s and 70s generations are significantly less likely to vote in supranational elections, echoing previous studies showing a general decrease in voting likelihood between pre-and post-baby boomers (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012; Blais et al., 2004; Franklin, 2004; Gallego, 2009; Konzelmann et al., 2012; Wass, 2007). Yet, a rising turnout pattern in supranational elections is observed among post-baby-boomer cohorts. Notably, the 80s and 90/00s generations socialised in a widened reach of the EU and the increased salience of European issues exhibited a growing tendency to vote in EP elections while controlling for the effects of age, period and compositional changes in social demography across cohorts. The results align with the observation of rising youth participation in recent EP elections (Becewe et al., 2019; Li, 2024).

Figure 1. Predicted random cohort effects on turnout in EP elections



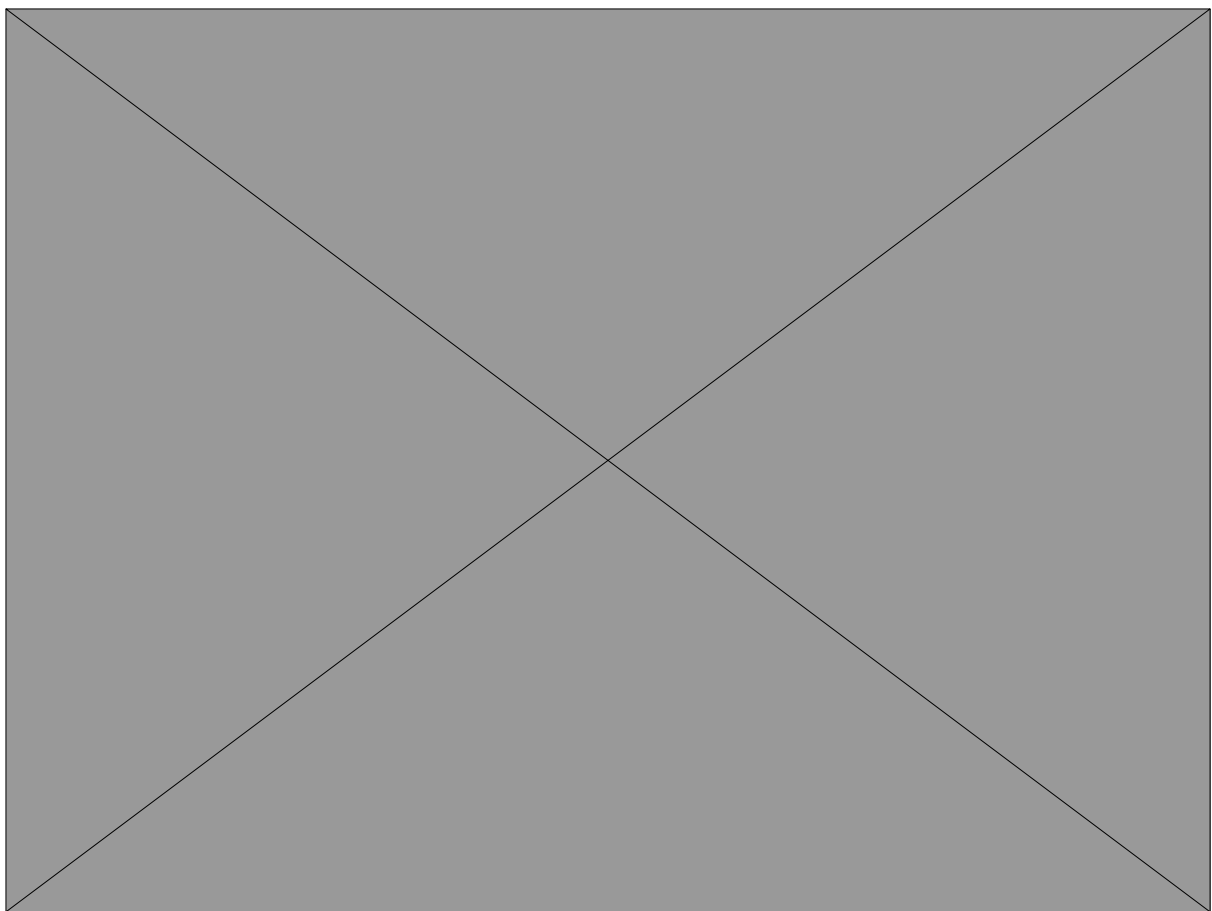
Note: The left panel contrasts the random cohort effects on turnout from Model 1 in Appendix Table 4, utilising data from the EES 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. The right panel compares the random cohort effects on turnout from Model 1 in Appendix Table 5, leveraging data from the Flash EB 162, EB 71.3, EES 2014, and EB 91.5. The magnitude of random effects is represented by the best linear unbiased predictions (BLUPs), and the shaded area denotes the 95% confidence intervals.

The following analysis compares how including additional explanatory variables, accounting for compositional changes in voter characteristics related to EU attitudes, perceptions, and exposure to the European election campaign, affects the estimated cohort-level variance in turnout among younger generations. If younger cohorts are more inclined to vote in supranational elections, partly because of more positive attitudes towards the EU, controlling for compositional differences in EU-related attitudes should diminish the observed increase in turnout levels among younger cohorts.

Figure 2 compares the differences in cohort-level variance between two types of models: base models and those including EU-related attitudes. According to the results of HAPC models on turnout in EP elections, favourable support for EU membership, trusting EU institutions, a stronger sense of European identity, and political efficacy in EU politics significantly encourage

turnout in supranational elections (see Model 2 in the Appendix table 4 and Model 3, 4, and 7 in Appendix Table 5). However, compositional changes in support for EU membership and trust in EU institutions only marginally account for the heightened turnout among younger cohorts. In contrast, the heightened turnout levels observed among younger cohorts are attributed to a growing sense of European identity and political efficacy in EU politics among younger generations. Notably, a stronger sense of European identity, referring to feelings of EU citizenship and attachment to Europe, mainly explains the heightened turnout among the 90/00s generation. In addition, the increased turnout among the 80s generation is substantially linked to their growing sense of political efficacy in EU politics.

Figure 2. Differences in cohort-level variance between base models and models incorporating EU-related attitudes

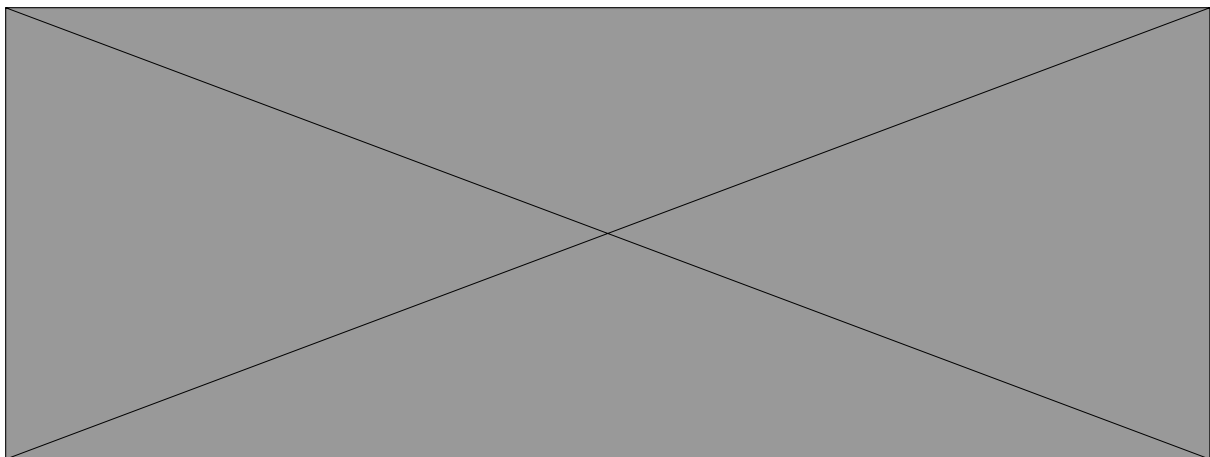


Note: The panels compare the estimated cohort-level variance between base models and those including additional explanatory variable(s) as fixed effects. Shade area denotes the differences between variance estimated from two types of models. The panel regarding support for EU membership compares the estimations from Model 1 with those from Model 2 in Appendix Table 4. The panel regarding trust in EU institutions compares the estimations from Model 1 with those from Model 3 in Appendix Table 5. The panel regarding European identity compares the estimations from Model 1 with those from Model 4 in Appendix Table 5. The panel regarding political efficacy in EU politics compares the estimations from Model 6 with those from Model 7 in Appendix Table 5.

Figure 3 compares the differences in cohort-level variance between two types of models: base models and those accounting for changing perceptions of the EU and the EP elections. It is demonstrated that the perceived EU competence explains little increased turnout among younger generations. Furthermore, respondents who indicate that the most important issue is

dealt with at the European level do not demonstrate a significantly higher propensity to vote in EP elections (see Model 6 in Appendix Table 4). In contrast, respondents who indicate that the results of EP elections are important are substantially more likely to turn out in EP elections (see Model 8 in Appendix Table 5). Importantly, compositional differences in perceptions of the importance of EP results account for variance in turnout level observed across generations, particularly for the 60s, the 80s and the 90/00s generations. It provides evidence that the increased importance attributed to the results of supranational elections is one of the key factors contributing to the higher turnout among younger generations.

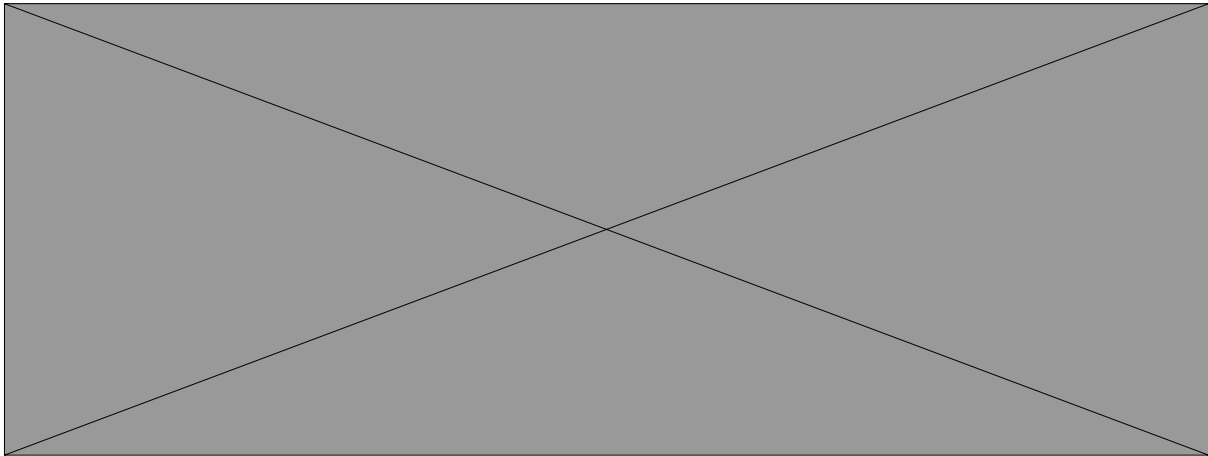
Figure 3. Differences in cohort-level variance between base models and models incorporating EU-related perceptions



Note: The panels compare the estimated cohort-level variance between base models and those including additional explanatory variable(s) as fixed effects. Shade area denotes the differences between variance estimated from two types of models. The panel regarding the perceived EU competence compares the estimations from Model 5 with those from Model 6 in Appendix Table 4. The panel regarding the importance of EP results compares the estimations from Model 6 with those from Model 8 in Appendix Table 5.

Figure 4 compares the differences in cohort-level variance between two types of models: base models and those incorporating exposure to the European election campaign. Regarding media attention to the campaign, respondents who closely follow the election campaign are more likely to participate in the EP elections (see Model 3 in Appendix Table 4). However, varying media attention to EP elections across cohorts does not reduce the heightened turnout levels among younger generations. In addition, although exposure to the voting campaign correlates significantly with turnout in EP elections (see Model 2 in Appendix Table 5), adjusting for this difference in composition across cohorts hardly explains the cohort-level variance in turnout in supranational elections. Therefore, exposure to the European election campaign does not appear to drive increased youth participation in EP elections.

Figure 4. Differences in cohort-level variance between base models and models incorporating exposure to the European election campaign



Note: The panels compare the estimated cohort-level variance between base models and those including additional explanatory variable(s) as fixed effects. Shade area denotes the differences between variance estimated from two types of models. The panel regarding the perceived EU competence compares the estimations from Model 5 with those from Model 6 in Appendix Table 4. The panel regarding the importance of EP results compares the estimations from Model 6 with those from Model 8 in Appendix Table 5.

6. Conclusions

The 2019 EP election significantly departed from its downward turnout trend, witnessing the highest level of participation in the past two decades. The 2024 EP election continued this momentum with a slight increase in voter turnout across EU member states. This notable rise in turnout, which deviates from previous patterns, challenges scholarly expectations based on demographic shifts and structural factors (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012; De Sio et al., 2019). While immediate analysis of the election highlighted the surge in youth participation as a contributing factor (Becewe et al., 2019), the underlying reasons driving this phenomenon remained largely unexplored. This gap in understanding prompts the inquiry into the sources of increased youth turnout in European elections.

Using HAPC models on repeated cross-sectional and cross-national surveys of EP elections spanning decades, this study investigates demand-side explanations related to shifting cohort characteristics that account for the increased youth participation in recent EP elections in Western Europe. It sheds new light on the dynamics behind the rising voter turnout in supranational elections among younger generations, particularly in the context of the unexpected increase in turnout in recent European elections.

Previous studies have pointed to citizens' apathy toward EU politics and their perception of EP elections as being of low significance as critical factors driving low turnout in supranational elections (Clark, 2014; Schäfer, 2021; Stockemer & Blais, 2019). However, this article suggests a fundamental shift in how younger citizens view EP elections, which contributes to greater voter engagement in supranational contests among younger generations. It shows evidence that

the rising turnout trend among younger cohorts can be partly explained by their increasingly favourable attitudes and perceptions towards the EU and EP elections.

Whereas earlier research highlights younger cohorts' strong support for EU membership and greater trust in EU institutions (Bauer & Morisi, 2023; Down & Wilson, 2013), this study reveals that these factors alone do not fully account for the increased turnout observed in recent EP elections. Instead, the findings underscore the relevance of a more vital sense of European identity, political efficacy in EU politics, and the perceived importance of EP electoral outcomes as crucial motivators for younger voters. Additionally, the minimal impact of exposure to the European election campaign on this trend challenges common assumptions about the role of electoral campaigns in driving voter participation. These insights offer a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of political engagement among younger generations and challenge the applicability of the SOE model in understanding voting behaviour among young citizens in EP elections.

The supranational elections have traditionally been viewed as second-order battlegrounds operating within national dynamics (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). The SOE model remains a prevailing paradigm in EP election research, positing that turnout decisions are primarily unrelated to the European polity (Schmitt et al., 2020; Schmitt & Mannheimer, 1991). However, the uncovered association between the surge in turnout among young voters in EP elections and their favourable attitudes and perceptions toward the EU and EP elections prompts a re-evaluation of the applicability of the SOE model to youth voting behaviours in EP elections.

Moreover, by delving into the complexities of youth participation, the findings offer valuable insights that have implications for policymaking, electoral strategies, and efforts to promote a more vibrant and participatory European democracy. For instance, while younger generations are more likely to vote out of their sense of European identity and perceived significance of electoral results, efforts to mobilise youth vote in EP elections may yield greater effectiveness by appealing to young people's sense of EU citizenship and by providing easily understandable profiles of party and candidate positions in supranational contests.

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Generational Perspectives on Premature Campaigning and Its Perceived Influence on Voting Preference

Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar¹

Although premature campaigning is considered illegal in the Philippines, it is still a widespread practice characterised mainly by the display of posters featuring politicians' months before the official election period. This study seeks to shed light on people's views across generations on premature campaigning and its possible effects on voting preferences. Using a descriptive mixed-methods research approach utilising surveys and interviews, data was collected from a diverse sample of participants representing Generation Z (Gen Z), Generation Y (millennials), Generation X (Gen X) and baby boomers. The research questions aim to explore respondents' attitudes towards premature campaigning, whether or not they find the practice acceptable, and the reasons behind their opinions. In addition, the study analyses scenarios in which respondents are asked a question to determine whether their voting preferences would be positively or negatively influenced by premature campaigning activities. Analysis of the data collected included statistical techniques, specifically Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation, as well as thematic coding to identify patterns and differences in views across age groups. The results showed that opinions differed between generations but were consistent when grouped by sex, highest level of education and social status. It is expected that these findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of premature campaigning in the Philippines. They will inform policy makers, election authorities and political analysts about the acceptability of premature campaigning and its impact on the electoral process. Furthermore, the study emphasises the need for clearer regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to address the challenges posed by premature campaigning and ensure the integrity of democratic elections, thus contributing to the improvement of electoral practises and governance in the Philippines.

Keywords: generational perspectives, political activities, premature campaigning, electoral, behaviour and policies

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1. Introduction

Premature or early campaigning involves political activities that take place before the official campaign period established by the electoral rules (Escovilla, 2019; Sison, 2009; Cruz, 2023). Candidates or political parties often engage in advertising, public appearances, distribution of promotional materials, and other voter outreach efforts ahead of the legally established campaign

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period (Glavas, 2017). This practice raises significant legal and ethical issues. Legally, it may violate election laws, which are designed to ensure a level playing field by giving all candidates equal time to present their programmes to voters. The regulations typically set specific time limits to prevent undue influence and maintain order and fairness in the electoral process. For example, the 1985 Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 881) explicitly prohibits premature campaigning, stating that any activities aimed at attracting voters before the official campaign period are illegal. Nevertheless, premature campaigning is widespread, and often starts months or even a year before the elections (Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility-Philippines, 2021; Shahani, 2015). Currently, political candidates, or those believed to be running, are displaying their images in public spaces more than a year before the May 2025 mid-term elections, which has led to considerable discussion on social media.

Premature campaigning can be observed in various forms. According to Cruz (2023), this includes the formation of organisations, associations, clubs, committees, or other groups of people with the intention of soliciting votes or conducting campaigns for or against a candidate. It also includes the holding of political caucuses, conferences, meetings, rallies, parades, or similar gatherings for the purpose of soliciting votes or undertaking any campaign or propaganda for or against candidates. Other practices include making speeches, announcements, or commentaries, or conducting interviews that support or oppose the election of any candidate for public office; publishing or distributing campaign materials designed to support or oppose any candidate; and directly or indirectly soliciting votes, pledges or support for or against a candidate. The Commission on Elections and election stakeholders in the Philippines have urged the electorate not to support politicians engaged in premature campaigning (Pantino, 2021). Despite these efforts, the engagement of politicians in such practices seems to continue unabated, and the election results suggest that people continue to vote for these politicians, suggesting that reminders of the illegality of these practises have little to no effect.

Zajonc (1968) explains that familiarity leads to liking or disliking, a phenomenon known as the Mere Exposure Effect. This psychological concept states that the more people are exposed to something, the more they tend to favour it. The Mere Exposure Effect occurs because repeated exposure to a person, image or object reduces insecurity towards that person or object. Historically, humans are primed to be cautious around new things that could be potentially dangerous. However, repeated encounters with the same stimuli without negative consequences lead them to conclude that there is nothing to fear. Consequently, people develop a more positive attitude towards familiar things than new ones. Remarkably, people are often unaware of the influence of the Mere Exposure Effect on their preferences. This psychological principle explains why politicians engage in premature campaigning—they want to increase their visibility and familiarity with voters in the hope that this repeated exposure will translate into votes on election day.

Since it is important to understand the perspective of the people, especially the registered voters who are the decision-makers in electing national leaders in democratic countries like the Philippines, it is imperative to examine the attitude towards premature campaigning. As it is a prohibited practice, public opinion on premature campaigning can show its influence on voting preferences and reveal voter bias. Analysing these perspectives is critical to understanding how people think in political contexts and to developing measures to protect the integrity of the electoral process.

Based on this premise, the researcher conducted this study with the following objectives:

1. To find out people's attitudes towards premature campaigning and whether or not they consider the practice acceptable.
2. To find out the underlying reasons behind their opinions
3. To determine whether the voting decisions of the majority are positively or negatively influenced by premature campaigning.
4. To determine whether people are biased towards political personalities.
5. To differentiate people's point of view, the influence of the practise on voting preference and people's bias based on their demographic profile, especially generation/age.

2. Methodology

This study implemented a descriptive mixed-method research design. It was conducted in Region IV-A in the Philippines, the region with the highest number of registered voters (Nazario, 2022) and involved 307 Filipino respondents who are at least 15 years old and registered voters as of February 2024. The Random Sampling technique was used to select the respondents, 103 of whom were from Cavite, 91 from Laguna, 65 from Quezon, and 48 from Batangas province. The minimum age was set at 15 because 15-year-olds are already eligible to vote in the Philippines. Each village in the Philippines has a youth organisation that functions as part of the local government called "Sangguniang Kabataan." Those eligible to vote for its officials are between 15 and 30 years old, while candidates for office are between 18 and 24 years old (Republic Act No. 11768; Republic Act No. 10742). The data collection consisted of two parts: Online surveys were conducted, followed by face-to-face interviews with all respondents. To analyze the collected data, frequencies and percentages were calculated, a thematic analysis was performed, and differentiation and correlation were assessed using statistical tests such as Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation.

Some of the questions asked:

- Is premature campaigning acceptable or unacceptable to you?

Those who find it acceptable were asked:

- If a politician you don't favour campaigned prematurely, would you change your mind and consider voting for that politician on election day?

Those who find it unacceptable were asked:

- If you favoured a politician, and this politician campaigned prematurely, would you change your mind and find the politician unfavorable so that you would not vote for them?

These questions aimed to determine whether premature campaigning influences voting decisions, the nature of this influence (positive or negative) and whether voters have prejudices against this practice.

In general, the majority of Filipino voters consider the practice of premature campaigning unacceptable, with 67 per cent of respondents being of this opinion. On the other hand, 33 per cent believe that premature campaigning can be tolerated. This minority opinion could be influenced by statements of the Commission on Elections and Supreme Court decisions on premature campaigning. Former Commission on Elections spokesperson James Jimenez, amid the widespread display of campaign banners throughout the country in 2021 in preparation for the 2022 Philippine national elections, explained that in order to violate election policy and be guilty of premature campaigning, one must first be an official candidate or that there should at least be an existing official candidate for the upcoming election. He stated, "So since there is no official candidate, there can be no crime or rather offense of premature campaigning" (Gonzales, 2021). Similarly, in the 2009 case of *Penera v Commission on Elections* it was held that unlawful acts or omissions involving a candidate do not take effect until the official campaign period begins, since official candidates are not identified until that time (*Rosalinda A. Penera vs. Commission on Elections and Edgar T. Andanar*, G.R. No. 181613). However, these positions have led to confusion as to what constitutes premature campaigning, underscoring the need for clearer provisions in the law.

Table 1. Does premature campaigning influence voting preference?

	Influence on voting preference					
	Yes		No		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Acceptable	77	75%	25	25%	102	100%
Not Acceptable	113	55%	92	45%	205	100%
Total	190	62%	117	38%	307	100%

Table 2. Premature campaigning influence on voting preference

	Influence on voting preference					
	Positive		Negative		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Acceptable	113	59%	77	41%	190	100%
Not Acceptable	25	21%	92	79%	117	100%
Total	138	45%	169	55%	307	100%

In terms of influence on voting preferences, a significant portion of the population, i.e. 6 out of 10 Filipinos, indicated that premature campaigning affects their decisions on election day, while 38 per cent indicated that it does not. The data also shows that the voting preferences of 4 out of 10 people are negatively affected by this practice. Of those who believe premature campaigning is acceptable, some argued that if they do not initially like a candidate but see them engaging in premature campaigning, they may eventually consider voting for them. However, 59 per cent of this group will not be persuaded to vote for such candidates. Conversely, 21 per cent of those who find this practice unacceptable said they would no longer support a candidate campaigning immaturely. This shows that only a small percentage are positively influenced by this practice, while 79 per cent would still vote for their favoured politician, suggesting a bias towards political figures.

These results clearly indicate that premature campaigning is likely to have a negative impact on voting preferences. The data also suggest that premature campaigning does not discourage people from voting for their preferred candidates, even if they find the practice unacceptable. Rather, it can give the favoured candidates an advantage on election day. Remarkably, those who find premature campaigning acceptable are also biased and express that premature campaigning does not change their perception if they do not like a candidate. This implies that while this practice may help to maintain the support of those who already favour certain candidates, it does not help to change the minds of those who dislike them before the election period.

Main reasons why Filipino voters consider premature campaigning is acceptable

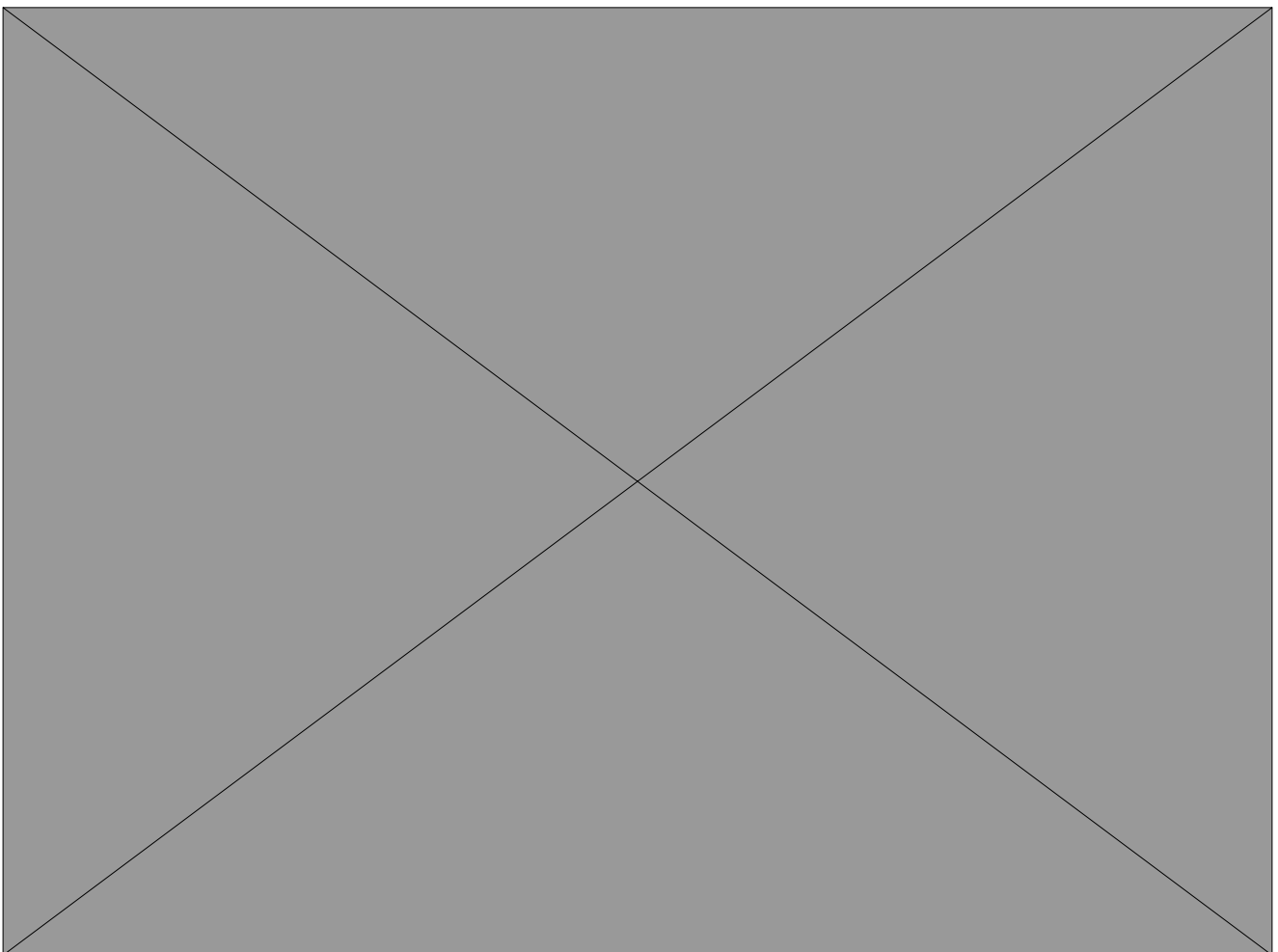
The most important reason is *Information and Awareness*. Many respondents believe that premature campaigning helps voters familiarise themselves with the candidates and their programmes. They argue that the official campaign period is not enough time to get to know the aspiring politicians and that they need earlier campaign activities. Although this is a violation of a law, they also argue that this helps to gather information about the candidates, so that they can make informed decisions at the polls. Another argument from these people is related to *Tradition and Habit*. Some respondents mention that premature campaigning has become a common practice in Philippine politics; they see it as something that happens regularly before elections and consider it acceptable in this context. *Accessibility and Reminder* is also their reason. Some expressed that premature campaigning reminds voters of the upcoming election, and thus encouraged the public to participate in the electoral process. Apart from verifying their voter data to enable smooth voting, being reminded also allows people to learn about and evaluate incumbent politicians who might run for re-election. Finally, some people argued within the premise of *Preparation and Strategy*. Some respondents believe that premature campaigning is a strategic move for candidates to become known to voters, particularly those that are not yet known and who do not have many resources compared to their opponents. They argued that candidates can increase their chances of winning in this way.

Main reasons why Filipino voters consider premature campaigning unacceptable

The main reason is the *Violation of Campaigning Regulations* as set out in the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines. Second is *Perceived environmental impact*. Concerns about environmental pollution and visual clutter caused by the dispersal of campaign materials, especially when left unattended after elections, were frequently cited by the respondents. It was difficult to control the distribution of posters, stickers, and other campaign materials during the official campaign period, so allowing this to be done earlier would definitely exacerbate the problem and lead to

more clutter and waste in cities. Another argument is Unfair Advantage. In contrast to those who find this practice acceptable, people who think that premature campaigning is unacceptable argue that it gives an unfair advantage to well-funded candidates who can afford to campaign extensively and early, and an obvious disadvantage to those with less resources. Some people also expressed that *premature campaigning could distract elected officials from their duties and responsibilities*, particularly those seeking to run for re-election. If these politicians prioritise their personal political ambitions over their duties in the final year or months of their term, they may neglect their work as sitting officials. Finally, there were voters who said that *premature campaigning does not respect the intelligence of voters* because it assumes that early exposure will sway their opinion before they have fully considered their choice.

Figure 1. Does premature campaigning influence voting preference?



The survey shows that among the four generations, Baby Boomers are the most problematic in relation to premature campaigning. Although the difference is not significant, they are the most in favour of this practise, even though it is a violation of the election code. Unfortunately, they are also the most influenced by it, suggesting that premature campaigning is most effective in making them favourably disposed towards a candidate, which is concerning. Following Baby Boomers, Millennials also show problematic attitudes and influence. 49 per cent of them were persuaded to vote for political candidates by premature campaigning. This suggests that the Mere Exposure Effect, although occurring in the context of an illegal activity, is most effective among Baby Boomers

and Millennials. Data also showed that the majority of Gen Z find the practise unacceptable, and that it significantly influences their voting preferences. Recording the highest percentage in terms of positive influence, 67.5 per cent of Gen Z said that they will not vote for a politician on election day if they campaign prematurely, indicating a strong rejection of political candidates who violate election guidelines. After Gen Z, Gen X is the least problematic when it comes to the influence of this practise on voting preferences. Most of Gen X, like Gen Z, find premature campaigning unacceptable and are influenced by the practice in similar ways, particularly in terms of the impact of premature campaigning on political preference. These two generational groups tend to change their views depending on how much a political personality engages in premature campaigning.

Based on the data, Millennials exhibit the highest bias towards politicians among all generational groups surveyed. Although the majority finds premature campaigning unacceptable, 46 per cent of Millennials stated they would still vote for a candidate they favoured even if that candidate campaigned prematurely. This indicates a significant tolerance among Millennials for this practice. They focus primarily on their preferred candidates and less on the ethical implications of premature campaigning. Following Millennials, Gen X also shows a bias of 46 per cent, although the data suggests that their bias is primarily influenced by their attitude towards candidates they don't like. Unlike Millennials, Gen X respondents, who find premature campaigning acceptable, are less influenced by it, and maintain their dislike of a candidate despite their campaign activity leading up to the election. In contrast, Baby Boomers show the least bias, only 3 of every 10 express bias against politicians. Despite being the most influenced by premature campaigning in their voting decisions, Baby Boomers overall exhibit a lower bias against political personalities compared to Millennials and Gen X. These results show that Baby Boomers are most influenced by illegal activities in their voting decisions, while Millennials are the most tolerant of premature campaigning. The latter often focus on the candidates they support, regardless of their involvement in such practices, which sets them apart from other generations.

The survey results also suggest that in terms of voting decisions and electoral behavior, Millennials closely resemble Baby Boomers as the most influenced by political activities, particularly those based on the Mere Exposure Effect. Millennials also show less regard for electoral policies compared to other generations. Conversely, Gen Z aligns more closely with Gen X. They are the least likely to be swayed by premature campaigning, particularly in terms of negative influence, and place great importance on candidates adhering to campaign policies. This alignment is supported by Hook Research Ltd (2019), which argues that Gen X and Gen Z have similarities in personality and decision-making processes. Moreover, an article from BoomAgain.com highlights the similarities between Baby Boomers and Millennials, emphasising shared values such as family, volunteering and religion. Both generations also prioritise community involvement and social issues. This is probably due to the fact that they grew up in a time when social awareness of gender equality, ethnic diversity, and other social issues was heightened. These similarities suggest that, in addition to these characteristics, Baby Boomers and Millennials may also share similar perspectives or behaviours in politics, particularly in voting.

Lastly, it is striking that despite the improvements in the voting behaviour of younger generations, particularly Gen Z, who have a more rational outlook, a significant number of them still disregard electoral policies and display a bias towards political candidates. The study shows that overall, 3 in 10 Gen Z find premature campaigning acceptable, while 32.5 per cent of those who find

it unacceptable are still biased by voting for their preferred candidates despite engaging in such practises. This suggests that complying with election laws and reducing bias is a challenge among some young voters.

Differences in the attitude of the Filipino electorate towards premature campaigning and its influence on their voting preference

People's attitudes, the practice's influence on their voting preference, and their bias for political personalities do not differ according to sex, level of education and social class. Females and males, people with a high level of education and those without a degree, rich and poor people have statistically the same attitude towards premature campaigning. They believe that this practice is unacceptable, but they are usually biased in their voting decisions. This suggests that sex, education level and social class cannot be used to predict whether a person will take electoral policies into high consideration before deciding who to vote for or not.

3. Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive overview of premature campaigning in the Philippines. Most Filipinos believe that premature campaigning is unacceptable, but despite their opposition, it significantly influences their voting decisions, often with negative implications. Remarkably, more Filipinos are inclined to vote for politicians who engage in premature campaigning than those who do not. This paradox is partly explained by the Mere Exposure Effect, which influences most Filipinos and leads to a bias towards political personalities. Generational differences are evident: Baby Boomers and Millennials are the most influenced by the Mere Exposure Effect and show the least consideration for electoral policy violations, while Gen Z and Gen X are less affected by Mere Exposure Effect. Furthermore, Millennials and Gen Xs show the strongest bias towards political personalities, whereas Baby Boomers and Gen Z are less biased, with the latter showing a preference to change their voting decisions based on campaign activity, although Baby Boomers are less concerned about policy violations compared to Gen Z. In addition, premature campaigning proves to be effective in maintaining the support of those already in favour of certain candidates, but it is less effective in changing the minds of those who are initially opposed. The novelty of this study lies in the detailed examination of the contradictory perceptions and behaviours associated with premature campaigning and the different effects across different generations. Its significance is underscored by the pressing need for stricter enforcement of campaign regulations and voter education to uphold democratic integrity and foster a better-informed electorate. For example, there is a need to launch an extensive public education campaign focused on the detrimental effects of premature campaigning, particularly how this practise undermines the integrity of elections. These education campaigns should specifically target Baby Boomers and Millennials. The results also call for stricter legislation and enforcement to curb premature campaigning, which starts with taking swift and decisive action against violators of electoral regulations.

In response to varying perspectives, targeted messages need to be developed to address the specific concerns and vulnerabilities of each demographic group. Since Baby Boomers and Millennials are the least likely to pay attention to electoral policies, they can be subjects of electoral

policy orientation. On the other hand, Gen Z, which is more receptive to electoral policies and less biased towards political figures, can participate in voter education programmes aimed at changing the behaviour of others. This also means that now is the time to empower younger generations to take on leadership roles in advocating for fair and ethical electoral practises. The government should therefore create opportunities for youth-led initiatives aimed at promoting accountability and integrity in the political process. The role that academic institutions play in this process should also be emphasised. Since most Gen Z are still studying, civic education should be integrated into school curricula. There is a must to teach students about the importance of voting rights, democratic principles, and the role of citizens in holding aspiring politicians and elected officials accountable. Overall, these findings highlight critical areas for policy and strategic interventions to mitigate the impact of premature election campaigns and improve the fairness of the electoral process in the Philippines.

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Political Prerequisites For The Legal Establishment Of The Institution Of Youth Rights At The International And European Level

Leanid Marozau¹

This study aims to identify the policy requirements for the creation of a legal framework for youth rights at international and European levels, as the need to protect these rights within a formal structure is increasingly recognised. The main research question is the legal capacity of youth, and the type of political participation and framework required for the institutionalisation of youth rights within existing human rights protocols. Using qualitative methods such as qualitative content analysis (examination of policy documents, legislative texts, strategic plans, and other relevant legal and policy frameworks both at EU level and within Member States) and qualitative analyses (content analysis, thematic analysis, framework analysis), including content, thematic, and framework analysis, the aim is to identify challenges and perspectives in advocating for youth rights from stakeholders in youth NGOs, EU representatives, and human rights experts.

The analysis will examine how youth NGOs can shape policy and contribute to the systematic legal defense of youth rights. It is expected that the results of the study will include a comprehensive understanding of the overlap of youth rights with other policy areas and the need for a harmonised legislative method. European youth policy, for example, is already represented by organisations such as the European Youth Forum and has established effective cooperation with high level institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe.

The aim is to recommend strategies to gain the political support necessary for such legal recognition and enforcement of young people's rights. This study becomes relevant to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on European societies, as it emphasises the integral role of young people, who occupy a unique position between childhood and adulthood, in the crisis response of EU countries.

Keywords: youth, youth rights, international level, European level, political engagement, legal framework, human rights, NGO, policy analysis, advocacy

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Introduction

This paper is relevant because it addresses the policy and legal frameworks needed to establish and enforce youth rights at the international and European level. Given the increasing recognition of the need for formalised youth rights, this research contributes new insights into the role of youth NGOs in shaping policy and promoting systemic legal protection for the rights of young people. The added value that the author brings to the field is a comprehensive analysis that includes perspectives

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from stakeholders such as youth NGOs, EU representatives, and human rights experts. The paper also examines successful cooperation models like the European Youth Forum and its influence on high level institutions such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe. In addition, the study discusses the important role of young people in the EU's response to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and recommends strategies for political support for the legal recognition and enforcement of youth rights.

Youth organisations and their representatives have already given themselves a political voice and their own political agenda in European countries as well as several countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas in recent years, since 1996, when the European Youth Forum, the main international non-profit association acting as an umbrella organisation and support group for national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations in Europe to fight for youth rights, was founded. Young people have become visible in political society and are demanding their rights for the future (environmental protection, the right to the internet, gender equality, etc.).

The study is particularly concerned with identifying the political conditions necessary for the legal establishment of the institution of youth rights at international and European levels. It aims to understand the legal capacity of youth for political participation and the framework conditions necessary for the institutionalisation of youth rights within existing human rights protocols. The study analyses the challenges faced by youth NGOs in advocating for youth rights and examines how these organizations can contribute to policymaking and the systematic legal defense of youth rights. The study also aims to recommend strategies to gain political support necessary for the formal recognition and enforcement of youth rights, especially given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on European societies and the significant role that young people have played in crisis response.

At the European level, political conferences, forums and various national youth festivals are organised annually. These projects include the "Youth Guarantee" (European Commission) program, which aims to ensure that young people receive a high-quality offer of employment, further education, a traineeship or internship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving an educational institution, the "European Youth Portal" – a website that helps young people across Europe navigate the many opportunities offered by the EU in various fields, such as volunteering, work, education, culture and many others. Every two years the EU Commission, together with the Parliament, organises the "European Youth Week", which aims to celebrate youth events in all countries participating in the Erasmus program, and to present the various mobility opportunities offered to young people in the EU. One of the most important initiatives is also the European Youth Capital program – an initiative launched in 2009 by the European Youth Forum (European Youth Portal). Each year, one of the European cities chosen as European Youth Capital is given the opportunity to present innovative initiatives by and for young people.

It is also worth noting that, partly due to the role of youth in the fight against COVID-19 in Europe, the year 2022 has been named in honour of youth, to honour the generation most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, to support the most vulnerable young people and to promote the opportunities the EU offers young people to inspire ideas and strengthen the European project (European Youth Portal, 2022). It is symbolic that the year 1979 was designated as the UN – International Day of the Child, following which the Convention on the Rights of the Child was

developed, and currently the UN Convention on the Rights of the Youth is being developed in Europe.

In addition, on 4 October, 2022, the Commission and the EU High Representative reported on the Action Plan for Youth (2022-2027), which aims to involve young people worldwide in the EU's external action (European Commission, 2022). The civic and political participation of young people is thus shaped by addressing the shrinking civic space and the role of the EU in developing a dialogue with partner countries on youth engagement that could be used NGOs, to bring about legal and systemic change. On 28 November 2022, the EU Council adopted conclusions aimed at supporting the involvement of youth worldwide in the policy-making process by expanding their participation and involvement in international forums and the allocation of necessary resources with a focus on activist protection, empowerment, health and mobility.

These aspects are therefore in line with the theme of my study, in particular the analysis of how youth NGOs can contribute to the policy and legal representation of young people's rights. The report's focus on the protection and empowerment of youth activists, skills development and the important role that young people play in politics reflects the study's focus on gaining political support for recognising and securing youth rights (Youth Action Plan: Council Engages Young People in Policy Making, 2022).

But even after and during the implementation of these certainly political events and programmes, European society was faced with legislative issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its further consequences. European society was partly confronted with issues of uncertainty regarding the mechanisms and system of protecting the legal rights of a certain part of society – the youth, as this part of society, due to its age, was the most actively involved in saving and preserving the lives of the majority of citizens in EU countries during the pandemic and thus found itself in the most vulnerable position.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a clear impact on young people. A study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has shown that "the impact of the pandemic on young people is systematic, profound and disproportionate." (United Nations, n.d.) For example, 23 per-cent of young people aged 18-24 who worked before the pandemic are currently unemployed, and those who are working have reported a reduction in working hours and income.

It is assumed that, from today's political perspective, it was not possible to define a set of legal norms that would protect young people in this situation, as this section of society is no longer "children" and not yet "adults" and are not fully covered by existing human rights mechanisms.

In our case, youth is a social group of people aged 18 to 35 years. We can turn to various approaches to define what "youth", as is described in the book "The International Law of Youth Rights" by editors Jorge Cardona, Giuseppe Porcaro, Jaakko Weuro, and Giorgio Zecca, as well as in a number of European legislative acts, and come to the conclusion that it has already become a recognised practice to consider youth as a social group of people at the age of 18, when they ceased to be children and are covered by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and have not yet fully acquired civil rights.

For the purposes of our study, youth NGOs should be understood as non-governmental

organisations in the general sense, dealing with youth issues or youth policy at the core of their activities, or consist largely of representatives of young people aged 18 to 35 in representative positions. According to the UN ECOSOC, the main characteristics of NGOs are their independence from the state – they are not established on behalf of the state, and their financial independence – they carry out their activities with the help of membership fees or donations, sometimes also grants (ECOSOC Res 1996/31).

Thus, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is the most important organisation consisting of more than 100 youth national councils and international youth organisations and is a reference example of a youth NGO in European countries. In our opinion, the YFJ is the main actor dealing with youth rights in Europe and influencing the political youth agenda at European and international level.

In my opinion, its influence is based on several factors:

- **Representation:** The YFJ represents a large and diverse group of young people in Europe, which gives a significant base for advocating for young people's rights.
- **Cooperation with EU and UN institutions:** YFJ actively works with European and UN institutions to ensure that young people's voices are heard in policymaking processes.
- **Advocacy:** Through its network, YFJ is able to coordinate the advocacy efforts of its member organisations and influence policy at both national and European level.
- **Policy-development:** YFJ participates in the development of policy at both national and European level.
- **Policy development:** YFJ is a channel for young people to influence the political agenda both in the EU and internationally.

In this way, YFJ acts as a channel for young people to influence the political agenda both in the EU and internationally, facilitating collective action by member organisations and advocating for policies that support and promote young people's rights.

Using the example of the activities of this organisation and the existing initiatives described above, as well as the practise of members of the YFJ – national youth councils and international organisations, we can analyse (comparison with the process of establishing the UN Committee on the Rights of Youth) whether these youth initiatives can be an agent of change, complementing a distinct type of human rights – to describe the political relations and relationships between European youth organisations and EU political institutions in terms of the willingness of European politicians to initiate the process of creating a new institute for youth rights on their own behalf or on the part of nation-states and EU countries as a whole.

The author's methodology involves a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical research. The theoretical part is likely to include a review of existing literature and legal documents to understand the current state of youth rights and existing mechanisms for their protection. This is very important to identify gaps in the existing system and to understand the contribution of non-governmental organisations. The empirical research component can include the collection of data on youth participation in various UN human rights processes and on recommendations made specifically for youth rights. This empirical data provides a sound understanding of the effectiveness

and limitations of existing institutional structures in addressing the needs and rights of youth.

The chosen methodology allows the author to combine a broad theoretical knowledge with concrete, real-world evidence, highlighting the importance and influence of youth and their organisations in shaping international human rights policy and provide sound arguments for the importance of legally enshrined youth rights.

Youth NGOs as political actors in defence of rights in the post-pandemic era

At the outset, it should be briefly noted that the international system for the protection of human rights has all the signs of a politically moulded institution and is used by all countries in the world, today by 193 UN member states, so that states gradually or over a certain period of time assume obligations to implement the provisions on human rights provisions contained in the human rights treaties signed including through the provision of various human rights reports, which are of interest to us for this study.

The question of whether European youth NGOs can become fully fledged political actors in European countries depends on whether the states have the political will to go in this direction and whether youth NGOs themselves also have the political potential.

UN Member States have the right to express their views on the human rights situation in their country and grant their citizens (national and international NGOs) a similar right at the level of the UN Human Rights Council, which was established in 2006 and replaced the UN Commission on Human Rights, which had operated for 60 years and on the platform of others human rights committees.

The number of UN human rights documents signed does not directly reflect the qualitative level of the commitments made by a country, in particular the democracy of a country participating in a particular convention at the international level. In the field of European human rights, the situation is different and often directly characterises the country participating in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, so that both have a structured and effective system of judicial enforcement in the EU structure and at national level.

In the context of the European human rights system, the situation may be more indicative of the participating state's commitment to human rights. This is because the European system has a more structured and effective system of judicial enforcement at both regional and national levels. The European Convention on Human Rights, which is enforced by the European Court of Human Rights, offers individuals the opportunity to bring complaints of human rights violations before a court. This judicial review can be a strong incentive for countries to ensure that their domestic laws and practices comply with the Convention.

For example, if the ECHR finds a violation, the state is not only obliged to remedy the violation for the individual applicant but also to take general measures to prevent similar violations in the future. This includes amending the laws, policies, or practises that led to the violation.

Furthermore, states that are part of the European Union have additional human rights obligations under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Compliance with their obligations is

monitored by the Court of Justice of the European Union, which can also influence the national laws of the member states.

The ECHR and EU systems differ from other international human rights enforcement mechanisms because they are backed by strong judicial systems that can directly influence national laws and carry considerable legal weight. This double layer of protection, combining regional and national human rights enforcement mechanisms, can often be a more accurate indicator of a state's qualitative adherence to human rights and can be seen as characteristic of democratic states that are subject to significant judicial scrutiny of their human rights practises.

From this point of view, youth NGOs can participate in this process at the UN level, i.e. NGOs can submit information that can be added to the "other stakeholders" report that will be considered during the review. The information they provide can be used by any of the States participating in the interactive discussion during the review in the Working Group time (OHCHR, n.d.).

In 2020, the author of this article developed and submitted the first Universal Periodic Review on the Rights of Youth in Belarus for the UN Human Rights Council for the first. In our opinion, this tool has more political significance and meaning for youth organisations operating in undemocratic countries, such as Belarus, but can also be seen as a first requirement in the process of human rights advocacy at international and European level. Most youth organisations and their representatives use the UN human rights instruments firstly to get noticed and secondly to see the effectiveness of this procedure.

The submission of alternative human rights reports or reports to various UN institutions by youth NGOs aims to clarify their position on human rights issues in the country, and is often also an opportunity to communicate new ideas and raise the issues of a separate category of citizens for the global bureaucratic system, such as the need to create a separate institute for youth rights.

We will not deal fully with issues and the entire history of the development of modern international law, and the sources of international law, as we will rely entirely on the authoritative works of such world-renowned scholars as Jan Brownlie and his book "Principles of Public International Law" and his follower James Crawford with the book "Brownlie's Principles of Public International Law" (2019), the well-known book by Martin Dixon "Textbook on International Law" (2013), and the textbooks on human rights by Rhona K. M. Smith "International Human Rights Law" (2021). These professors have also distinguished themselves as experts in practice, by appearing as experts on international law before the UN International Court of Justice, which may speak in favour of their credibility.

Our task in this study is to understand how modern international law can change with the help of political and advocacy campaigns on behalf of youth non-governmental organizations and whether this is possible, as well as whether there have been cases in history where states have shown bilateral political will in such initiatives.

In this article, we do not focus on the internal state politics of decision-making, but we are interested in how representatives of states position themselves at the international level (for example, Uzbekistan, in our opinion, is not the most democratic country in the world and ranks 149th on the list of democratic countries, but at the international level in the EU and the UN this

state is one of the pioneers in promoting the rights of young people).

The historical background shows us that relatively recently, in 2010, the last of the list of nine (ten – Russian-speaking scientists, the authors single out separately the UN Subcommittee against Torture) treaty bodies established within the UN - the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, that is, according to the practice of political changes - this is an insignificant period of time and the world community it does not cease to develop in the issue of protecting the rights of various little (insufficiently) protected groups.

It can therefore be said that the development of contemporary international law is an ongoing process (the debate on the need to reform the UN also confirms this fact), we can also make reference to two works that are of interest in our study, namely the book "The Making of International Law" (2007) by authors Alan Boyle and Christine Chinkin and the work "Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations Human Rights System" by Fiona McGaughey (2021).

Both works are of interest for the study of the mechanism of establishing new human rights institutions and the possibilities of NGOs to influence and shape international law. This explains their relevance to the topic of research on the legal establishment of institutions, such as the advocacy for youth rights at the international and European levels, and the role of NGOs in initiating processes in the UN system. By examining these works, one can understand historical precedents and methodologies that may be informative or applicable to the promotion of youth rights and the potential role that youth NGOs can assume in this domain.

Scholars Alan Boyle and Christine Chinkin have done a great job describing in Chapter 2 several situations when NGOs were the authors in the emergence of a new international law. Thus they considered "strategies for NGO participation in the development of international treaties, and also focused on whether they are independent participants in international law-making or whether they are more properly considered as additional actors in state-centred processes." [16] That is, they have also considered the origin of the political will of states in this matter.

In addition, we see relevant examples of how NGOs have already been one of the main initiators of new institutions of human rights protection in the history of international law, for example, the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), having its origins in the works of Henri Dunant and his book "A Memory of Solferino" and the establishment of a special commission in Geneva. Furthermore, the authors show the history and practice of the creation of the Convention against Torture thanks to the world-famous organisation Amnesty International, thanks to the efforts of the aforementioned ICRC.

In the wake of the pandemic, the challenge of exclusion in education has become increasingly urgent, emphasising the need for substantial policy interventions. "Education in an Altered World: Pandemic, Crises and Young People Vulnerable to Educational Exclusion," edited by Proyer (2023), comprehensively addresses the multidimensional impact of crises on the accessibility and quality of education for young people. This source provides empirical evidence of the vital role that youth NGOs play in mitigating educational disruption in unprecedented times. This study can contribute to understanding of the scale and nature of the policy responses needed to combat educational exclusion in times of crisis, as well as the influence of young people on policy change in the world.

As an intermediate conclusion, we note that the practice of influencing and even forming institutions for the international protection of human rights exists, but in all the publications cited above, youth is not mentioned as one of the possible actors; however, neither is the opposite claimed, from which we can draw the logical conclusion that youth NGOs and their representatives also have a possible political right to initiate new processes in the UN system. Applying this to youth NGOs, we can conclude that such organisations can use soft power tactics such as campaigning, awareness raising and lobbying to influence public opinion and policy. They can build networks and partnerships with like-minded organisations and entities to influence international human rights institutions. Given the complex interdependencies between states, international organisations and non-state actors, the collective efforts of youth NGOs have the potential to bring about change - this can include initiating processes at the UN level to ensure the rights and participation of young people.

In the book "Non-Governmental Organisations and the United Nations Human Rights System" (2021), Fiona McGaughey asserts that between 1950 and 1971 some 30 NGOs were involved in the drafting of the Refugee Convention, and NGOs also participated in the drafting of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Fiona McGaughey (2021) also refers to the work of Cynthia Price Cohen "The Role of Nongovernmental Organisations in the Drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (1990), which states that the original idea for the creation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child came from a non-governmental organisation - the Save the Children International Union.

The UN system itself can also be an independent actor in the process of shaping human rights, more precisely the permanent meetings of state representatives, NGO representatives and members of human rights committees, for example, the submission of a human rights report by the state to the UN every four years. In this issue we can only emphasise the limited procedure and mechanism of participation of new NGOs, as well as logistical and other financial problems for representatives of NGOs, especially youth NGOs, and the danger of participation in such events for various NGOs from non-democratic states, for example, the materials of the Belarusian National Youth Council RADA in Belarus have been classified as "extremist" and their dissemination can lead to criminal prosecution, and the authors of such alt-right organisations can be prosecuted (Belarusian Youth in Exile, 2023).

Despite all the challenges for youth activists and youth NGOs from totalitarian countries, according to the UN data, young people use the existing mechanisms to protect human rights, even if they do not consider them to be fully adequate for themselves. This is evident from the statistics of the UN's recommendations on youth rights (Youth in Exile: The Belarusian National Youth Council [RADA]).

Thus, only 1 per cent of the total recommendations made in each UN human rights process were youth-specific:

- **9 UN treaty bodies:** 1.5% (1,377 out of 93,009 recommendations)
- **Universal Periodic Review:** 1.11% (966 out of 86,762 recommendations)

- **Special procedures:** 0.64% (102 out of 16,003 recommendations)

It can be concluded that only 1.08 per cent of the recommendations concern youth or youth policy in general. These results may have various reasons, but from our own practise we can conclude that youth NGOs are unfortunately still not seen as a separate entity in the UN human rights system. Researcher Fiona McGaughey also points out the "weak" position of some NGOs when they do not provide their information in a coalition with other "adult" NGOs, which also appears as a form of discrimination (2021).

However, most researchers also fail to take into account the fact that youth NGOs in Europe were sufficiently established as political actors for the defence of rights during the pandemic period and now also been given a "voice" in the post-pandemic period, as the information in the next part of this article shows.

The following are examples and sources of information that prove this:

- **Political voice and agenda setting:** Youth organisations, historically since the establishment of the European Youth Forum in 1996, have gained a political voice and their own political agenda in European countries.
- **Systematic legal defense:** The study of the role of youth NGOs in shaping policy in Europe shows that these organisations have contributed significantly to the systematic legal defence of the rights of young people.
- **Targeted programmes for young people:** Initiatives like the "Youth Guarantee" programme ensure that young people receive offers of employment or further education within four months of becoming unemployed or completing formal education.
- **Recognition and celebratory events:** Europe's naming of the year 2022 in honour of youth shows recognition of the role of the young generation in the fight against COVID-19.
- **Policy influence and empowerment:** The establishment of the European Youth Capital programme and the European Youth Week illustrate the influence of youth NGOs in the policy-making process by highlighting youth initiatives and increasing their participation in the EU. (European Youth Forum, 2023)

These examples show how youth NGOs have established themselves as critical actors in the European political and policy landscape. They have succeeded in attracting attention, participating in decision-making, and influencing policies, particularly in the area of youth rights and empowerment, which has been recognised and acted upon by high-level European institutions. These efforts reflect the essential role that youth NGOs have played during the pandemic and suggest that their influence in shaping the post-pandemic recovery and policy environment continues.

Youth NGOs as a catalyst for building international institutions-for youth rights.

While the results of youth NGOs in the field of human rights are rather statistical in nature, but nevertheless very useful for the purposes of our article, the situation in the field of international politics has not only changed over the past few years but has also taken on concrete features.

Thus, in 2022, a political institute for youth advocacy was created, the UN General Assembly decided to "establish a UN Youth Office as a special unit for youth within the Secretariat" [23], which was preceded by the work of a special envoy to the UN Youth Commission and the establishment of the UN Youth Office. This was preceded by the work of a Special Envoy on Youth, which was more symbolic in nature.

The intersectionality of education, race, and democratic engagement among European youth can be illustrated by drawing on the seminal work of Henry A. Giroux and Susan Searls Giroux in "Take Back Higher Education: Race, Youth, and the Crisis of Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Era" (2004). Their examination of how institutional and systemic inequalities impact civic participation and educational opportunities for young people provides pertinent insights into the current climate in which youth NGOs operate. It reminds us how urgently these organisations not only need to engage in policy advocacy but also to work toward deeper democratisation of education.

It should be added that the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth is an office created by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2013, which will remain in existence and integrated into the UN Youth Office. This fact may indicate several things, first of all that states are able to create new institutions for the protection of human rights, in a relatively short period of time, and to emphasise individual human rights as the most endangered, i.e. to respond to changing circumstances. In the author's opinion, the same procedure can be applied to the creation of a new institution for the protection of youth rights - the creation of a new UN Committee on the Rights of Youth.

Reference can also be made to the work of Thomas Davis in the Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations (2019) to discuss the role of non-governmental organisations in international politics, and in particular how youth NGOs can influence international relations and advocate for youth rights. Davis' book can provide a comprehensive overview of the functions and influence of NGOs on global political processes, which is of direct relevance to the study of youth rights. Drawing on existing literature, the author is able to show how youth NGOs operate within the broader spectrum of NGOs that Davis writes about and how they may face unique challenges or have particular strengths when advocating for youth rights internationally.

There is also a view in political science that "the UN Youth Office is not as revolutionary as it appears at first glance" (European Journal of International Law, 2022). As researcher Julian A. Hettihewa notes in his article "Looking Behind the UN Youth Office: Considering Structural Limitations of Youth Participation After the Party" that "young people are often unaware of their domestic counterparts or predecessors, as well as international partners (2022). It may well be that young people from the same state support opposing demands in the name of youth."

It seems to me that this is not only not fair, but also does not do justice to the reality of the year 2023 on its merits. In practise, one can only take an organisation such as the European Youth Forum, a platform, which represents more than 100 youth organisations and brings together millions of young people from all over Europe.

Over the past five years, the organisation's members have drafted and adopted a variety of resolutions and documents on youth rights, including issues such as the shrinking space for youth and youth organisations, support for youth activists, the rights of minorities and so on. The information can be found on the official YFJ website, and it at least questions or rather refutes the

above-mentioned opinion of Julian A. Hettihewa that young people do not have a common vision and opinion.

In examining the role of youth NGOs in shaping contemporary European youth policy, one can find historical parallels to the activism narrated in Lewis's "The Shadows of Youth: The Remarkable Journey of the Civil Rights Generation", in which young activists became full participants in the shaping of policy and the and the defence of civil rights (2010). This precedent emphasises the potential of today's youth NGOs to create political conditions conducive to the establishment of international youth rights institutions.

The European Youth Policy is already a well-established and respected institution, working in an effective and organised way with respected institutions such as the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as the elected Youth Advisory Council of Europe, which since 2016 has been a non-governmental partner in the co-management structure that sets standards and priorities for the work of the Council of Europe's youth sector and makes recommendations on future priorities, programmes and budgets.

In considering the evolving landscape of youth rights in the European Union, it is important to understand the background to higher education and research policies that impact young people's mobility and social rights. The findings of Anagnostopoulou and Skiadas in "Higher Education and Research in the European Union: Mobility Schemes, Social Rights and Youth Policies", highlight the complexity of these issues and the significance of the EU's role in advocating for and implementing policies that support youth development and empowerment (2022). These findings emphasise the relevance of youth NGOs in influencing policies that affect a wide range of youth rights and facilitate their active participation in European civil societies.

In this article the author also refers to the opinion of a youth delegate from the Norwegian Youth Council who in 1982 feared the isolation of young people due to the creation of a separate institution for youth rights.

In my opinion, this may be important from the point of view of historical memory but can in no way be considered a relevant or pertinent commentary on the process of creating a new institution for youth rights. The world community, especially the generations of young people, is changing quite rapidly, not only in its ideology but also according to the challenges of the times. So far, at least in European countries, there has not been a broad debate on whether a specialised institute for youth rights is needed.

Further proof of this is that more than 100 national youth councils and international youth organisations, under the initiative of the representatives of Greece, Portugal, Egypt and El Salvador at the UN, held a discussion on the strategic planning for the UN Convention on the Rights of Youth in the framework of the European Youth Forum 2023 in Brussels (Belgium). The author was one of those who moderated this discussion and also witnessed an absolutely clear common position on the need for this convention.

In 2024 the main issues facing youth organisations in Europe are the lack of global awareness of what youth rights are, because until then for many in the UN it is the same as children's rights. There are also difficulties in finding entry points for strategic youth rights advocacy and finally,

the processes are difficult for youth organisations to access: lack of resources, lack of meaningful participatory processes, limited knowledge of the UN.

The concerns highlighted appear to be obstacles, both in terms of structure and perception, which could hinder the effective promotion of young people's rights:

- 1. Differentiation from children's rights:** Youth rights are often lumped together with children's rights, which can lead to a dilution of focus on the specific issues facing young adults, such as the transition to work, higher education, and political participation. Distinguishing youth rights emphasises the particular challenges faced by this population group, which are not adequately addressed in the context of children's rights.
- 2. Strategic starting points for advocacy:** Without clear opportunities to exert influence, it is difficult for youth organisations to make their voices heard. Finding effective starting points for advocacy means understanding the political processes and finding ways to engage with policy makers to shape the youth rights agenda.
- 3. Accessibility and resources:** Youth organisations may lack the financial means and institutional knowledge to navigate complex international systems such as the UN. They need access to information and funding to participate meaningfully in policy development and advocacy.
- 4. Participatory processes:** Involving young people in decision-making processes ensures that policies reflect their needs and viewpoints. However, if participatory mechanisms are weak or non-existent, youth perspectives can be left out, resulting in policies that do not adequately address their concerns.
- 5. Knowledge of the UN systems:** The bureaucratic structure of the UN can be challenging to navigate without the appropriate knowledge. Training and capacity-building initiatives for youth organisations can enable them to participate more effectively in UN policy-making processes.

Addressing these issues can strengthen the capacity of youth organisations to advocate for their rights, and thus ensure that their unique needs are taken into account in the formulation of international and European policies.

That is, there is a clear understanding and vision of needs and goals, but their fulfilment and implementation depends on the political will of the world political community - here we have only one newly created institution for the representation of youth rights - the UN Youth Office, but as the statistics show, young people already have a legal and political need to defend their rights at the international level, within the framework of the UN Committee on the Rights of Youth.

Without drawing a parallel, we would like to point out that the Committee on Enforced Disappearances was set up directly by the UN in the 1970s, after the widespread and systematic practise of enforced disappearances in Latin American countries was identified. In other words, the countries of the UN General Assembly took the political decision to enshrine the rights of a particular social group, in this case people affected by torture and disappearance, in a legal document - the Convention. However, as is customary in international politics, the focus on the definition of human rights or respect for fundamental freedoms, in terms of protecting the rights of certain groups of people in a particular region or even a particular country is beginning to take shape.

As Rhona K. M. Smit writes in her book "International Human Rights Law" on the international protection of human rights, the international system of human rights protection has already emerged, but the UN is also evolving and has developed a special programme, the "Technical Cooperation Programme", through which states can request expertise and assistance as well as measures to protect human rights, including youth (2022). This means that despite the stable UN system that has been established, states can create so-called "roadmaps" to address emerging issues.

Thus, after COVID19, special attention was paid to the most vulnerable population groups, The International Law Association notes that the United Nations raises the hopes of so many oppressed people of the world. Every year, thousands of individuals and groups turn to UN bodies for help. On their behalf a multitude of non-governmental organisations try to put their cases on the international agenda. When national institutions fail, when governments do not respond, millions of tortured, oppressed and starving people turn to the UN (2000).

It can therefore be assumed that the organisations of the independent sector (NGOs) also exert their political influence on the shaping of the new system of international law and human rights.

It should be noted that this idea is not new. As early as 1995, Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said at the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations at Headquarters that "non-governmental organisations should lead the mobilisation, discussion and implementation of human rights".

Many scholars have also subsequently paid much attention to the fact that non-governmental and independent organisations can and do influence the formation of new political and legal institutions. For example, Leslie Johns in her book "Politics and International Law" describes that treaties are agreements between states, private actors - individuals, corporations and NGOs - can help states negotiate and implement treaties, but they cannot accede to treaties (2022).

As already mentioned, the drafting of an international UN convention on the rights of youth began at the European level in 2022, and youth organisations and expert communities from the field of non-profit sector - NGOs, such as the European Youth Forum and its member organisations - were involved in this process.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Youth is clearly a future international instrument, for the creation of which there must be political will in the form of a treaty. The youth consultation on the establishment of the UN Youth Office on 8 October 2022 and the discussion on how the UN Youth Office can improve the meaningful involvement of youth in the UN system and its main areas of work, and how to ensure the open and continuous participation of youth in the work of the UN Youth Office, can be seen as preparatory measures.

As a reminder, this discussion was organised following the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/306 in 2022 and thanks to the members of the UN Core Group on the Rights of Youth. In addition, political decisions are initially made at the level of political statements and declarations, which is why 2022 has been declared the Year of Youth in the countries of the European Union. EU countries wanted to emphasise the precarious financial and youth situation (in time for

COVID19) and emphasised that the European Year of Youth is a moment to move forward with confidence and hope in a post-pandemic perspective" (European Youth Portal).

It is also important that the European Parliament and the European Commission emphasise youth as a separate group. For example, in her 2021 State of the Union address European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the Union address declared that 2022 should be the year dedicated to those who have done so much for others, and subsequently, in October 2021, the European Commission presented its official proposal to declare 2022 the European Year of Youth.

Other politicians, such as the Vice-President for the Promotion of our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, issued statements in which they also supported this initiative and emphasised that European politicians "support young Europeans in the defence and promotion of freedom, values, opportunities and solidarity" (2021).

The outcome of all the discussions and declarations on 2022, the Year of Youth, has also led to the formation of several key priorities, one of which is to mainstream youth policy into all relevant European Union policies in line with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and to promote the integration of a youth perspective into policy-making at all levels.

In turn, the EU Youth Strategy makes it very clear (paragraph 2A) that "youth policy should be firmly linked to the international human rights framework" (2018). This shows us the integrity of the understanding of the human rights system in Europe, as well as the additional focus on youth rights through policy instruments.

But more importantly, the European Union's policy not only extends fundamental human freedoms, but also strengthens the rights of young people. Paragraph 2C of the strategy states that "all policies and activities concerning young people should support the right of young people to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies affecting them through the meaningful involvement of young people and youth organisations". This study is not about a detailed and legal analysis of all norms in European Union policies, but we note that there is an existing interest in the youth agenda.

In the document, European politicians point out that young people and youth organisations can demand recognition of their rights as a separate social group - youth - as well as the right to participation and self-organisation. At the international level, within the framework of the UN, the world community has taken a different path, which can be clearly reflected in the diplomatic approach to the formation of new institutions of influence, so that the issues of youth and youth rights have been taken out of the sphere of "basic" UN bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Council and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and delegated to a special mandate (assistant) of the UN Secretary-General - the UN Youth Envoy.

In her 2020 speech, Jayatma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth defined her mandate as "advocating for the rights of all young people to engage constructively in realising positive change" (United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia).

From a political perspective, it is important to note that the envoy herself says that her "job is to ensure that young people around the world are involved in the implementation of the strategy".

This refers to the UN Secretary-General's system-wide youth strategy "Youth 2030". But from a legal or rather human rights perspective, this mandate is of little relevance to local youth organisations fighting for their rights (2018).

In exploring the nuanced ways in which young adults navigate the social structures of modern European societies, "Rites Of Passage: Social Change And The Transition From Youth To Adulthood" by Irwin provides an invaluable perspective (1995). It sheds light on the evolving expectations of adulthood and the social factors that influence these transitions. It emphasises the necessity for youth NGOs to advocate for policies that take into account the changing contours of these rites of passage.

Conclusion

From the information presented, it can be deduced that the international community could face various challenges in establishing a new institution for the protection of youth rights. These include the question of whether the legal and international expert bodies such as representatives of the UN, states, and international human rights organisations are willing to take on additional monitoring tasks to oversee the enforcement of a new human rights treaty on the rights of youth. Furthermore, UN member states will undoubtedly be confronted with a political question: are world leaders and elites ready to make political commitments to uphold the rights of young people and show the political resolve required to integrate new norms of international law into their national legislation? In my personal opinion, the above facts show that the establishment of such a human rights institution for the rights of young people is realistic at this stage only on the territory of the Council of Europe countries (with the exception of Belarus and Russia).

The preparatory legal and political conditions are already in place, but the ability of youth organizations and their representatives to effectively assert their rights at European and international level will be crucial. It is important that youth activists establish themselves as valued members of society who can articulate their viewpoints in a professional language that is also heard in bureaucratic structures. Another important factor is whether the democratic countries in Europe will support the global initiative put forth by colleagues from Greece, Portugal, Egypt, and El Salvador. The political conditions for the legal establishment of the institution of youth rights at international and European level depend on the willingness of legal professionals, representatives of the UN, states, and international human rights organisations to take on additional monitoring duties and ensure the implementation of a new human rights document for young people.

To summarise, the article is a comprehensive study of the political conditions required for the legal establishment of youth rights at international and European level. The results of the study highlight the importance of creating a formal framework for the protection of these rights, which is strongly influenced by the active participation of youth organisations.

Key findings include:

- Since the establishment of the European Youth Forum in 1996, youth organisations have gained a political voice and agenda that increases the visibility and activism of young people in the

political landscape.

- The implementation of various EU initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee programme, the European Youth Portal, the European Youth Week and the European Youth Capital programme have helped to advocate for youth rights and improve access to employment, education and cultural opportunities, but further development is needed, for example, in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- The crucial contribution of young people in the fight against the COVID-19 crisis in Europe has been recognised, leading to 2022 being declared as the year of honouring youth. This recognition goes hand in hand with a commitment to support and empower the most vulnerable young people in the EU.
- The development of the UN Convention on the Rights of Young People is a milestone in the formalisation of the rights of young people and shows the evolution of these efforts since the introduction of the UN International Day for the Protection of Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The EU's targeted measures to engage young people in external action and the adoption of the EU Council Conclusions represent concrete steps to increase the civic and political participation of young people around the world. The research emphasises the need to build political support for the recognition and protection of youth rights and reflects the complex interplay between young people's activism and legal advocacy for their rights.

To summarise, the current policy does indeed reveal challenges in creating a comprehensive set of legal norms that adequately protect young people. This difficulty stems from the fact that these people are in a transitional phase; they are no longer children but are not yet recognised as fully-fledged adults. Consequently, they fall into a gap within existing human rights mechanisms, which tend to focus on either children or adults, so that the unique needs and rights of young people are not adequately addressed.

Efforts are currently being made to close this gap, including the development of youth-specific initiatives and legal frameworks. The creation of a UN Convention on the Rights of Youth, for example, is a step toward formal legal recognition and protection of young people's rights. However, until such instruments are fully established and implemented, young people may find that their rights are not as fully protected by existing laws as those of children and adults.

This article can contribute to future research by providing a comprehensive overview of the role of the contemporary political landscape in shaping juvenile justice legislation. It lays the groundwork for further research on the challenges young people face in the transition from childhood to adulthood and the legal protections they need. The successes and challenges of existing advocacy efforts described in my paper can also guide future researchers and activists in developing effective strategies to promote youth rights. By highlighting the lack of precise legal standards for young people, this study also points to an important area for further scholarly work to fill this gap. Finally, this preliminary study of interagency cooperation and youth-centered initiatives can help assess the impact and effectiveness of international policy and youth engagement in democratic processes and serve as a rich source of information for scholars and policy makers alike.

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Exploring Youth Challenges: Key Takeaways from the NYRIS Conference

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The Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), one of the most prestigious international meetings of experts in youth research, was first organised in 1994 and has been repeated every few years since then. This year it took place for the sixteenth time in Tampere, Finland, from 12 to 14 June. The conference provides a platform for researchers from around the world to share and discuss their latest findings on the lives of young people. In just three days, we had the opportunity to attend a variety of presentations, covering key issues facing youth today. Researchers from different continents participated, presenting their work together with other scientists. Hungary was represented by about ten participants, mostly from the Youth Research Institute at Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC) and the Corvinus University of Budapest.

Keywords: NYRIS, youth issues, international conference

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1. Introduction

This year's NYRIS featured a total of 40 presentations in five Parallel Sessions covering a wide range of critical topics relevant to today's youth. The diversity of presenters matched the diversity of the audience and the diversity of the programme. Several panels were held simultaneously, allowing attendees to choose the one that most suited their interests. The presentations covered important themes such as media and the digital world, participation and youth work, social policy, well-being and mental health, youth crime and delinquency, environmental issues, gender and sexuality, labour market and participation, mobility, social relations, youth culture, and urban spaces. These diverse topics show that the presentations covered almost every aspect of young people's lives and provided comprehensive insight into the challenges and opportunities they face. Below we focus on some key presentations **on social media issues and their causes that provide** valuable insight into this topic.

Jagoda Górecka (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland) in her presentation titled: **"Exploring youth identity: self-presentation, visual representations and social media"** talked about online and visual self-representations of youth; and online youth identity. She discussed the classes of self-presentation, how youth typically equate their value to the number of likes and comments they get on an online platform such as Instagram, and how the line between personal and public is blurred

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in visual representation Photos depict stories about us that are no longer personal after they are posted on social media. There is a gap between this generation, often referred to as the selfie generation, and their parents, due to this shift in visual culture. This gap can also cause problems in young people's lives because they are the first "online generation". They have no one to ask, they make their own rules.

Georgina Kiss-Kozma (Mathias Corvinus Collegium, Hungary) in her presentation entitled "**How is digital media transforming young people's relationship strategies?**", spoke about **how and why relationships are changing**. First of all, young people are experiencing life stages later than the generations before them, and there is population ageing underway. A study, published in 2020, shows that 82 per cent of Hungarians consider it "very important" or "rather important" to have children. But can online dating help to find the right partner and increase the birth rate in the future? According to this presentation, 44 per cent of people think that online dating sites bring more danger than advantage, also almost 40 per cent have had negative experiences with them.

Veronika Pelle (Corvinus University Budapest) presented on **how to build media awareness and education within families where often parents have difficulties with digital literacy**. Today's young are the first to grow up with technology. They are the first to use it, they make their own rules but have no one to seek advice from. Does this mean that their parents cannot teach them anything about technology and media? No. Many parents are aware of the fact that the media can be dangerous to their children, and they try to manage the situation using their own solutions. According to research, there are 4 + 1 strategies such as: 1. Restriction and Prohibition: Set rules for the use of smartphones. For example, kids are allowed to use their smartphones in the living room but must not bring them into the kitchen or bathroom, etc. 2. Control: Check the devices to see who they are chatting to and what they are searching on Google. 3. Restrictive Technologies: Parents set up firewalls and family related links for their kids. 4. Active Mediation: This may be by far the best solution as it means talking about the online dangers, frequently discussing what happened, or sharing- learning how to play videogames with their kids. The plus-one option is that parents do nothing because they do not feel they can contribute anything new to their kids' knowledge of the online world. Unfortunately, a third of the parents fall in this group. This is a losing strategy because digital platforms were created and designed to be addictive.

The constant flow of comments and likes, which young people tend to use as a substitute for popularity and happiness they may not experience in the offline world, leads to dopamine addiction in the brain. But it also creates stress. The fear of missing out (FOMO) kicks in, so they don't want to put the phone down, even if nothing is happening. While potentially damaging to their self-esteem, too much time spent in online environments can adversely affect their health as well by interfering with the sleep cycle and daily routines

"Social interaction, mental health and performance pressure among students" by **Jessica Hemberg, Amanda Hyvönen, and Pia Nyman-Kurkiala** (Åbo Akademi University, Finland), says that loneliness, despite its usually negative connotations, can also be a positive experience. Loneliness can be voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary loneliness can manifest as Alienation (an isolating feeling of not belonging); Invisibility (an experience of not being seen or heard heard), and Deviation (a separate element that makes one deviate from the norm). Voluntary loneliness, on the other hand, can be constructive when you accept that you are lonely, or you choose not to be with

others. It can be experienced in four ways: Sanctuary (a place or time to breathe), Self-reflection (a time to reflect and develop as a human being), Independence and self-awareness (getting to know and like who you really are).

The world of artificial intelligence was explained in the presentation by Tamás Bokor (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary) in his lecture: "Trust me, I was made by an engineer". The title is a little joke based on the old saying: "Trust me, I am an engineer" to question how reliable AI technology actually is. Artificial intelligence was born from a combination of mathematical, statistical, technical and programming knowledge, and has evolved into its current form through deep learning (DL), processing large amounts of data, and machine learning (ML) in the form of algorithms. The final vision for AI is defined as programs with the ability to learn and reason like humans. The stage we are at today is called Weak AI. It solves complex problems but has no identity, knowledge or belief system on its own. In the future, there may be a version that we call Strong AI. This is a theoretical stage -- an intelligent machine that can solve complex problems and has a mind of its own we may never reach. But at a certain point in the future, will AI become an individual "person" like us? Will it gain human rights? If it helps us with something, will it need to be given credit? To some extent this is already an issue: when I generate a text, essay, poem or similar with the assistance of AI is the authorship mine or the AI's, or does it belong to both of us? Should the work be labelled as "By XY and AI/ChatGPT"? Other problems also arise. If robots with individual thinking emerge, would they take over our jobs? There are people out there pondering this and even created a website called "Would robots take my job", where one can calculate the chances of various jobs being taken over by intelligent machines.

Tamás Bokor's presentation also included the results of a questionnaire addressed at students, in which an equal number of respondents agreed with two opposing questions: "Greater understanding of AI leads to a better job in my adulthood", and "Due to the spread of AI, I may not have a job as an adult". We can see that people think the future is quite risky because of these technologies, and they can no longer predict what will happen. We do not have a clear idea about AI and its implications. Maybe it will help us, maybe it will not, much like social media. It can help us to be a better version of ourselves, but at the same time it can also work against us.

2. Other topics covered in the conference

In addition to the topics of social media, wellbeing and mental health in adolescents and young adults, the sessions also covered the following broader topics: methodological and ethical considerations in researching violence and abuse against young people; social media, wellbeing and mental health in adolescents and young adults; support, tensions and new formulations in young people's family relationships; dealing with forms of gendered power, conflict and violence among young people in the digital age; as well as youth street groups, delinquency and mediation.

Exploring temporalities in violence against adolescent girls through longitudinal research

Megan Devonald, (GAGE/ODI) a researcher from the United Kingdom, presented her research findings focusing on the temporal aspects of gender-based violence against adolescent girls. She utilised a longitudinal mixed-methods approach across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan, and Lebanon

– the research aimed to understand how violence against adolescent girls evolves within different socio-ecological contexts. The presentation highlighted that gender-based violence manifests differently throughout the life course and across diverse geographical locations. It emphasised the importance of examining temporal shifts in social norms and practices that influence the continuation or mitigation of violence. She offered insights into critical periods of vulnerability during adolescence, shedding light on when and how interventions can effectively prevent and address gender-based violence.

Interviewing young people who have experienced intimate partner violence - trauma-informed ethical considerations

Anu Isotalo, from the University of Tampere, presented her research on interviewing young people who have experienced intimate partner violence. Her study focussed on ethical considerations when conducting interviews with individuals who have repeatedly experienced violence in intimate relationships. She took a trauma-informed approach, focussing on ensuring safety, trustworthiness, and respect for participants' autonomy. The research comprised eleven interviews with young adults aged 18-26 who had experienced violence in their long-term relationships. Examples from the interviews illustrated ethical choices made during the interviews to minimise potential harm and ensure participants' well-being and highlighted the role of supervision in upholding ethical standards, maintaining research quality, and supporting participants' welfare.

Violences in children's and young people's lives: Continuities and contradictions in counteracting the violence

Linnéa Bruno, from Stockholm University, talked about the complexity of dealing with violence in the lives of children and young people in Sweden. Based on a chapter of her forthcoming book, she explores how different policies and practises interact to shape responses to violence against women, children, and young people. The presentation looked at three specific areas: universal violence prevention in schools, law reform and social work to combat honour-based violence, and post-separation contact agreements between children and abusive fathers. It examines how these policies and practices reflect wider societal inequalities and have changed over recent decades and concludes with reflections on their interconnectedness and impact. Corporal punishment of children has been banned since 1979, which has led to a decrease in child abuse. However, there are still problems with violence against women and children, exacerbated by a more restrictive immigration policy. On the debate over sexual consent: Influenced by movements like #MeToo, Sweden enacted the Consent Act of 2018, defining sexual violence as non-consensual sexual acts and emphasises improved sex education in schools. On counteracting racism: Young ethnic males are still often labelled as criminals, which contributes to societal prejudices and challenges in tackling violence. There is also a tendency to attribute societal problems, including violence, to immigrants. Linnéa also gave an example of the case of Fadime Sahindal, who was murdered by her own father. This case triggered a nationwide discussion about violence and drew attention to problems such as forced marriage and cultural integration for ethnic minorities in Swedish society.

Check, reflect, act! Challenges for effective bystander behavior in the event of sexualized violence among peers

Researchers Luise Dinger (Social Science Research Institute on Gender Issues), and Rebecca

Gulowski (German Youth Institute) from Germany presented their findings on sexualised violence. The prevalence of sexualised violence among young people underlines the importance of the role of bystanders in prevention and support. The qualitative research comprised interviews (n=15) and group discussions (n=3) with young people involved in or affected by sexualised violence. The findings show that the challenges to effective bystander behaviour are rooted in peer dynamics in five main forms. Normalisation means the way of in which the situation is perceived: the adaptation of gender stereotypes and verbalised objectification such as „That's just the way men are” lead to acceptance of the problem. The trivialisation of abusive behaviour is a general phenomenon in which peers can play down the abusive behavior. Acceptance or even reinforcement of this behavior can lead to inner rejection. Distancing means that victims refuse the bystander's intervention due to discomfort or fear („have a lot to lose”). Finally, exposure to abusive situations may impact bystanders negatively and lead to self-harming to protect the friend („hurt me, not her”).

Intergenerational interdependence: A focus on mother-young adult daughter relations in the context of marginal social locations

The presentation by Roni Eyal-Lubling (University of Sussex, United Kingdom) explored the evolving dynamics between mothers and young adult daughters in the context of social marginalisation and poverty, with a focus on interdependency. Traditionally, the focus of scholarship has been on the upbringing of young children, but more recently there has been a shift in interest towards the relationship between parents and young adult children. The study highlights the central role of mothers and mother-daughter relationships in communities facing poverty and marginalisation. The case study involved 40 interviews with 20 mother-young adult daughter pairs from marginalised backgrounds, exploring their experiences of trauma and interdependency. It was found that after the daughters turned 18 and became adults, the mothers often sought material and financial support from them. This interdependence extended beyond financial assistance to include emotional support, with daughters expected to listen to their mothers as a way of „paying back” the care received in childhood.

“Young people think differently now”: reproductive ambivalence in parenting decisions in Poland from an intergenerational perspective

Justyna Kajta (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway), Paula Pustulka, and Justyna Sarnowska (SWPS University, Poland) conducted a project to explore the changing norms of relationships and starting a family in Poland. The relevance lies in the fact that family patterns have changed rapidly and declining birth rates with increasing childlessness have become a central social problem in Poland. The study focuses on intergenerational perspectives and collects data from two waves of interviews conducted in 2021 and 2023 with young adults aged 18-35 and one of their parents. It explored how the different generations perceive the possibility of becoming parents in their own life course. The key findings highlighted the perspectives of parents and young adults. Many parents see parenthood as a natural and obvious choice, although with gender specific focus on experiences such as taking pride in children and post-natal depression. They also tend to accept that their children might have different views on parenthood. Young adults expressed uncertainty about parenthood and see it as a personal choice that might not be suitable for everyone due to anxiety or practical difficulties. They perceive parenthood as both a choice and a social pressure, where they must navigate between family expectations and societal obligations. The findings suggest that better policies are

needed to tackle the negative effects of social crises (housing, employment) that stand in the way of parenthood. Also, a safe and trusted healthcare system is needed so that young people experience less stress about their pregnancy and early motherhood.

Experiences of digital violence in young people's intimate relationships

Recent Nordic studies conducted by Sonja Tihveräinen and Marita Husso (Tampere University, Finland) and, Marjo Kolehmainen (University of Turku, Finland), have shown the high prevalence of digital violence in young people's intimate relationships. A third of the young respondents experienced digital control by their partner, who dictated who they could be friends with or where they could go. Another third reported constant surveillance via messaging or social media. The study involved eleven interviews with young people aged 18-26, all of whom had experienced violence in a long-term relationship. The dynamics of digital control include surveillance – when the partner constantly calls or messages to check on their whereabouts and expects responses 24/7, – and control – when the partner controls where they can be and with whom, checks their messages regularly, and controls their social media accounts, including messages, photos, and contacts – and coercion – when some participants were coerced into sexting or had to reveal their account passwords under threat. The consequences are severe: victims were often isolated from friends, family and social situations due to their partner's controlling and coercive behaviour. The constant monitoring and control led to significant emotional and psychological stress, which affected their well-being and daily lives. The dynamics of compulsive digital control can remain hidden from others due to confusion, fear or shame.

Battles between the good, the bad, and the evil: How the Finnish state produces and punishes "street gangs" in court

Based on the concept that it is insufficient to consider street gangs as „wrongdoers“, and drawing on ongoing ethnographic field research on "street gang trials" at the Finnish Court of Appeal, the presentation focussed on the processes of street gang formation, classification and punishment. Ethnic minority men are a growing concern in these contexts as found by Lotta Junnilainen's (University of Helsinki, Finland) work. The category "street gang" is often equated with organised criminal groups, and implicitly associated with fear of immigrants. This study examines the first-ever observed gang trial involving 15 defendants associated with the gang. However, the evidence presented to prove the "gang lifestyle" included indicators such as hoodies, music, tattoos, social media discussions, ethnic relationships, usernames, and posts, which was far from sufficient. Furthermore, they were convicted solely based on images presented in court to establish their guilt. In a typical criminal trial, the prosecutor must prove that the defendant committed a specific crime at a specific date. Instead, in gang-trials, much of the evidence is about proving association and criminality in general. The project asks how the gang problem in the context of the Finnish welfare state has been created from above, i.e. a problem that politicians, courts and other powerful actors discover and define; and from below, i.e. street gangs as part of everyday life in the urban peripheries, a reality that mainly concerns people whose voices are rarely heard.

Diet-culture and young people constructing (healthy) identity online

The body is often seen as a reflection of individual characteristics and traits. Among young people, sharing their food consumption and eating habits on social media has become an important means

of shaping their online identities. The presentation focussed on how young people participate in contemporary diet culture while trying to resist normative food restrictions and the pressure to maintain a fit body. However, this online identity formation is not independent of social and cultural influences, as researchers Magnus Kilger and Fanny Pérez Aronsson, both from the Stockholm University, have discovered. Diet culture is about monitoring and controlling food intake through restrictions, while fat studies criticism and body positivity movements focus on the social aspects of living in a non-normative body. Intuitive eating promotes a positive relationship with food and encourages people to pay attention to their hunger and listen to their bodies rather than restricting certain foods or calorie intake. On TikTok in particular, there is a phenomenon, called „girl dinner“, which refers to eating leftovers or small portions when alone. This can be seen as disordered eating behaviour, as food is classified as "good" or "bad, showing young girls an unhealthy relationship to food. Self-representation on the internet is therefore not just how we represent ourselves, but also how the algorithm delivers content to its users.

3. Conclusion

The NYRIS conference provided a comprehensive overview of the many challenges facing young people today. While only a fraction of the presentations can be highlighted here, the conference covered a broad spectrum of important challenges from intimate relationships to broader societal issues such as the environment, gender dynamics, and juvenile delinquency. Loneliness is a widespread issue among youth, exacerbated by both voluntary and involuntary experiences. Social media plays a dual role, providing both a sense of belonging and a source of anxiety and isolation. The study of mother-daughter relationships in marginalised contexts has revealed a complex web of interdependence that challenges traditional notions of adulthood and requires differentiated policy approaches to support these families. Changes in family formation and reproductive choices have been analysed from an intergenerational perspective. The decision to become a parent is influenced by social, economic, and political factors. To combat declining birth rates, we need to understand these dynamics and support young families. Young people also navigate complex value systems and require support to manage conflicting demands. The importance of family relationships, the role of friends, and the balance between current commitments and living in the now are crucial to their future aspirations. There is an urgent need for interventions in young people's relationships that address both the online and offline aspects of intimate partner violence.

Emerging Voices: Up-and-coming scholars in youth research gather at Budapest conference

Paul Moran¹

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On Tuesday, May 14, 2024, the Youth Research Institute organised a PhD conference geared towards young researchers studying the hottest topics related to youth today.

*The conference, entitled **Emerging Voices: Perspectives from the Next Generation of Scholars** in Youth Research and held in Budapest, Hungary, had four areas of focus: youth and artificial intelligence, education, political activity, and mental health. Researchers from all across Europe, Asia, South America and Africa joined to bring these timely topics to the forefront.*

The opening lecture, “The Participation of Anthropomorphic Virtual Characters in Social Movements,” revolved around CGI (computer-generated imagery) technology and its effects on the youth population. Speaker Evelin Horváth, PhD student at Corvinus University of Budapest, spoke of the growing trend of young people creating anthropomorphic characters in the metaverse to represent not only their individual personalities, but also their political and social beliefs. Horváth spoke of major social and societal changes during the last few years, such as the MeToo movement, the Trump movement, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Horváth explained the purpose and importance of creating these characters as a means of self-expression and to connect with others sharing the same views. However, she also questioned the effectiveness of these characters when it came to advertising purposes and to create social awareness. Horváth was concerned that the novelty of creating CGI characters may overshadow their intended purpose or reflect the creator’s dedication to making an original character over the message itself. However, she ended on a more positive note by speaking

of the environmental advantages of using CGI characters, namely that they do not require a list of materials and personnel for production, and do not leave environmental damage in their wake.

The second lecture, “Code Culture,” was presented by Michele Varini of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy. The main theme of this lecture was the relationship between virtual characters in gaming and fashion in the real world. Varini emphasised that class distinction and fashion trends are being replicated in the virtual community, even more so as more gamers connect with one another at rates not seen before. Varini used the COVID-19 pandemic as an example. As so many people were forced to stay home, more people played games. Even games that are traditionally aimed for younger audiences, such as “Animal Crossing,” became more popular with older gamers. Since there were barely any new fashion innovations in the outside world during this period, gamers around the world used their custom-made characters to showcase not only their own designs, but they replicated their own cities as well (one noteworthy example being the Milan fashion week performed in a virtually reconstructed version of Milan). Varini successfully made the case that virtual reality increasingly mirrors fashion in the real world.

The next lecture, “Behind the Filter: A Study on the Effects of Instagram Selfies on Body Image Perception Among Young Indian Adult Females,”

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was presented by Nilotpal Bhattacharjee, PhD student at Assam University in Silchar, India. The lecture primarily revolved around the negative consequences of selfies among young Indians. Data presented in this lecture showed that India has the highest rate of selfie-related accidental deaths on earth. Bhattacharjee's findings also presented why so many young Indians take selfies, such as for social validation, gaining followers, and emulating celebrities. Very few respondents in the surveys took selfies just for personal pleasure. The presentation ended on a positive note, calling for an effort to embrace body positivity and acceptance, instead of demoralising comparison and competition by means of social media.

The next panel focused on education among youth. The first speaker was Byambasuren Nyamkhuu, PhD student at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Her lecture was titled "Coping with Academic Stress: My Doctoral Journey in Hungary as an Asian Student." The focus of this lecture was learning to balance the tedious schedule of university classes, relaxing, and maintaining a social life. Nyamkhuu also spoke of the initial culture challenges of coming from Mongolia to Hungary, such as less of a power-distance between herself and her Hungarian professors and being encouraged by her professors to address them on a first-name basis. Nyamkhuu spoke of her life changing with the advent of COVID -19, and how she was forced to slow down and adapt to a slower, yet more tranquil pace of life, while still maintaining her academic diligence. Her positive message reminded us all not to be intimidated by changing situations in life, and to remember to cultivate relationships in our busy schedules.

The next speaker of this panel was Adrian Estrela Pereira, PhD student at Eötvös Loránd University. His lecture was titled "Digital Transformation: A Pathway to Connect Higher Education Institutions to the Requirements of

Increasingly Digitalised Interrelated and Global Societies." Pereira focused on how schools do and must continue to adapt to technology for the benefit of their students. He also emphasised the importance of effective budgeting to help schools invest in new technology, and the need for teachers to be receptive to continuing professional development to effectively use new technology.

Following Pereira was PhD candidate Thiri Pyae Kyaw, also of Eötvös Loránd University, presenting "Epistemological Beliefs and Teaching-Learning Perceptions: A Systematic Literature Review." The main focus of this presentation was on how presupposed beliefs and conditionings affect the acquiring of knowledge, and the need for more research in how young people learn in various cultural settings. Key findings in this lecture pointed to the importance of students and teachers being aware of how they acquire knowledge and taking a nuanced approach when seeking to understand the learning process.

The third panel of the conference revolved around politics. The first speaker was Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar, PhD student with Southern Philippine Academy College and Director for Research and Publication with Calayan Educational Foundation Inc., in the Philippines. His lecture was titled "Generational Perspectives Toward Premature Campaigning And its Perceived Influence on Voting Preferences." The primary focus of this presentation was the negative impacts of premature campaigning in Filipino elections, despite laws against doing so. Findings in this study concluded that different age groups have different perspectives on the ethics of early campaigning, with the popularity of certain candidates also playing a role in the public's perception of early campaigning. Aguilar recommended that the public be better educated about the specifics of early campaigning before reaching a definite conclusion for who to vote for.

Next was PhD candidate Chiao Li, studying at the Center for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE), Sciences Po Paris. Li mainly focused on voter turnout among youth, specifically during the 2019 EP election. In contrast to older generations, younger voters have a different view of civic pride, identity within the EU, and the tendency to vote based on new ideas of their place within society. Li concluded that young voters would continue to be active if their “cohort characteristics,” the uniting factors for why those within their age group are politically active, are recognised and encouraged by candidates prior to an election.

Following Li was Dr. Shalini Garg, Inspector of the Department of Cooperatives in the Government of Rajasthan, India. Her presentation was titled “Youth Led Cooperatives.” The theme of this lecture, cooperatives, refers to the common goals groups within a community can reach through democratic means. Dr. Garg outlined innovation, advocacy, capacity building, and leadership to achieve cooperative goals. Notably, the United Nations has projected 2025 to be “the year of the cooperatives,” with a prediction that more countries will meet cooperative goals. Dr. Garg concluded by stating that cooperatives can continue to thrive if members participate democratically, cooperate economically, and value independence and autonomy.

The final panel dealt with mental health. The first lecture, “A Psychodynamic Interpretation of Suicide in Young Adulthood,” was presented by psychologist and PhD student Nurdan Kozan Caki, with the University of Essex. Key points of this lecture included risk factors for suicide among youth, the vulnerability of youth during the adolescent phase, and the prevalence of suicide among young adults. Caki also spoke of personality disassociation, mental pain, and the desire to self-punish as catalysts for suicide. Caki concluded by reiterating the importance of diagnosis, prevention, and long-term

psychotherapeutic intervention for preventing suicide.

The next speaker was Erna Földvári-Uricska, ESP teacher and PhD student with Corvinus University. Her presentation, “The Coronavirus Pandemic: Challenges and the Aftermath” revolved around the changing of lexicon reflecting how individuals coped with the COVID-19 pandemic. New mediums of expression, such as virus diaries, virus memes, and virus poems were developed to relieve stress, as well as entertain. New expressions like “coronaspeak” were invented. Földvári-Uricska concluded that social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram helped youth come together and form a new lexicon based on the COVID-19 pandemic, with benefits for their mental health.

The next lecture, “Interrogating the Impact of Religious Cults on the Mental Health of Youths Involved in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Johane Masowe Gore Jena Penyera Nyika Cult,” was presented by Crispin B. Marasha from Stellenbosch University, South Africa. The main theme of this lecture was the dark side of alternative religions, and how they can manipulate youth with pre-existing mental struggles. Marasha used the raiding of Lily Farm in Nyabira as an example, in which 251 children were rescued from a religious cult. Marasha concluded by speaking of Bronfenbrenner’s Theory, that youth may be more likely to join a cult based on their early childhood environment, and that more research is necessary to understand this.

The final speaker of the conference was Hubert Antokolski of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. His lecture, “Psychoactive Substances in Modern Society”, was an overview of the development and use of drugs within modern society, a notable example being the American opium epidemic of the 1880s. After a further evaluation of other countries’ drug epidemics, with varying results in preventing

abuse, Antokolski shared that sometimes overregulation of a substance can cause more problems and create more addicts. Ironically, alcohol is legal in most societies, yet possibly the most dangerous drug. This lecture concluded a productive conference, which offered hope and solutions for today's youth.

The Emerging Voices Conference concluded on a hopeful note, offering innovative solutions and strategies for youth to navigate the challenges of the modern world. Each speaker brought unique perspectives and valuable insights, making the conference a resounding success and sparking motivation for further cooperation among international actors and the Youth Research Institute.

Twin Studies in Social Science: Review

Ágnes Réka Dusa¹

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“There are two things in life for which we are never prepared: twins.”
(Josh Billings)

It is always a pleasure to see a research group formed around an interesting and current scientific issue, and particularly exciting when the members of this group represent a single discipline, but come from several institutions and belong to different generations. This is also the case with the book entitled *Twin Studies in Social Science* (edited by András Pári, Zsófia Drjenovszky, Rita Hegedűs, and Ágnes Engler). The common discipline in this case is social sciences – and worth highlighting because of the subject matter of the book - while twin research is dominated by biomedical analyses, this volume, published in 2023, approaches twins as social phenomenon from the perspective of sociology. Although some of the editors and authors are experienced researchers, young researchers have also been given the opportunity to present their findings.

The book includes nine studies, the first of which (Drjenovszky & Hegedűs 2023) serves as the unofficial foreword to the book, as it introduces the topic, the research team and briefly outlines each chapter. Already here a motif emerges that runs through all the studies in the book: the problem of stereotyping, prejudice, and social expectations that twins must face starting in childhood.

The second study (Forrási 2023) explores the competition between twin siblings and the resulting conflicts. The author points out that the rivalry between twins starts in the womb in a biological sense, and after birth, the constant comparison can reinforce their conflict later in a

social sense. Twelve semi-structured individual interviews were conducted by the author with six twin pairs aged 18-23 at the time of the interview. An important finding was that of the twins who responded, those who were not so similar in appearance were less compared by their parents, teachers and friends, and their performance was not compared with each other, so these twins were also more likely to spend time together in the same class share hobbies and be in the same group of friends. The twins who are often compared with each other by their peers, in turn, become more competitive and their relationships and self-image deteriorate.

The third study focuses on the socialisation process of twins, and the social expectations placed on them (Fülöp 2023). Through eleven interviews with individual twins, the author explores the socialising effects of family and school, and the stereotypes surrounding twins. Rivalry is also discussed, along with the development of an independent identity and the experience of being twins. Parenting strategies are revealed where parents, for practical reasons, consider the twins as one unit at a young age, therefore the formation of individuality is postponed until the high school years. The research shows that due to their close relationship, the twins are each other's "referent powers", whose influence on them is much stronger than that of similar relationship types like classmates, or friends.

The next study is a literature review that (Pári 2023) could perhaps have been placed earlier

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in the book as the author systematises the most important questions related to twins and previous twin research with a demographic and population focus. The author points out the importance of twin registries, which are more than "simple" birth statistics, as they also contain specific data such as the type of twin relationship (dizygotic/monozygotic), medical information, and different types of sensitive demographic data. The study also emphasises the background of twin births and the role of assisted reproduction techniques such as IVF in the context of the fact that the average age at childbirth is increasing.

The fifth study deals with the issue of stereotypes and adaptation to the (twin) roles as displayed by others in the middle school age group (Tóth 2023). The author could have written more about the concept of social roles in general, but the theoretical part on twins is detailed. The empirical analysis comprises six paired interviews supplemented by sociometry. The interviews conducted with a large age difference in the volume are also interesting, but the strength of this analysis lies in the fact that the interviewees are the same age, and in the same life situation. One of the most interesting findings is that all twins fitted into the class community as a pair (rather than separate individuals), that they had friends in common and played a central role in the class community.

The study by Mór (2023) approaches the topic from the perspective of role sharing between twins. The eight interviewees belong to two generations (those in their early twenties vs over forty-five), which is an interesting approach and offers the possibility of comparison. One of the key findings of the analysis is that, surprisingly, the older generation was less aware of stereotypes and role expectations in relation to twins and could express their individuality more easily than younger generations. Analysis of the background factors was not possible due to

the small number of respondents, perhaps the study remains valuable without this.

The next study (Pataki 2023) analysed social stereotypes about twins using a mixed methods approach. On the one hand, the author conducted quantitative secondary analysis of a survey database of parents of twins, and on the other hand, she conducted interviews within a very interesting subculture with people who are not twins themselves, but who role-play twins. An interesting part of the survey analysis is the question of naming, i.e. how important it is for parents to give their twin children a matching first name. The merit of the qualitative research is that it explored the extent to which respondents had stereotypical thoughts about twins when constructing their role-play character. The comparison with the background variables was not really successful in this study either. Unfortunately, other parts of the role-player interviews were not included.

At first glance, the next chapter resembles "classical" medical twin research, as it deals with the twins' health behaviour, including their smoking and alcohol consumption habits, but at the same time, the approach remains social scientific (Pári & Palagyi 2023). The authors used the data of 101 interviewed twins from the 2021 large sample database of Hungarostudy. Due to the sociological approach, the usual explanatory variables emerge, such as gender, highest level of education, marital status, various satisfaction indicators (with their occupation, life in general, their financial situation, and finally with their jobs), as well as the presence of physical pain, but the most exciting comparisons are based on the type of twin relationship (monozygotic/dizygotic). Unfortunately, in contrast to previous findings, no significant association was found between zygosity and smoking habits, and this was also true for alcohol consumption habits. Two interesting results should be emphasised: Firstly, according to the researchers, twins

who are less satisfied with their lives consume alcohol more frequently, and secondly, twins who do not experience physical pain consume alcohol more frequently, also, male twins smoke more and drink more alcohol than female twins.

The authors of the last study turn again to the parents of the twins and examine how the parents see their children as twins, and whether (and if so, which) stereotypes and expectations can be seen in these characterisations (Hegedűs & Drjenovszky 2023). Their analysis was based on an online survey completed by 135 parents. In this study, an open question of this questionnaire was analysed, in which parents were asked to describe their twins together. The results show that the respondents do not have stereotypical ideas about their twin children, and more educated parents characterise their children in a slightly more nuanced way. Another interesting addition is that those parents who tried to choose a matching first name when naming them are more inclined to see stereotypical twin characteristics in their children.

Overall, the great merit of the book is that it shines spotlight cast on the topic of twins that has only been researched in a narrow circle in Hungary, and does it from a social scientific perspective, as opposed to the usual medical-biological one. The studies in the volume are professional and well-written, even young researchers use the technical terms accurately, yet the texts are readable and easy to follow, which is also helped by the spectacular and polished editing. This is important because the book may be of interest not only to readers interested in the social sciences but to a wider range of audience. This book is highly recommended not only to researchers dealing with twins, but also to twins themselves, their parents, other family members, their teachers, and to all those who do not (yet) have a twin acquaintance, b you can learn a lot about problems that affect not only twins – such as stereotypes, oppressive social

expectations, or prejudices – but about the general nature of these problems. Unfortunately, the weakness of the book can also be linked to these phenomena. As mentioned earlier, the concepts of stereotype and social expectation accompany the studies in this volume, but because of this it is at times somewhat repetitive. This is the case even if each study has a slightly different angle, methodology, and focus. The other problematic area is the methodology and the fact that although there are more and more twins in society, there are still few of them and they are difficult to reach. Conducting interviews is a great way to better understand the impact of stereotypes, prejudices, and social pressures on the lives of twins. However, perhaps it would have been useful to interview many more people for the studies, so that the differences between different types of twins or the demographic differences could also be analysed, or else a much more homogeneous sample should have been taken in a study (for example, only identical twins who are high school students or only fraternal twins who are opposite-sex and middle-aged). Of course, the difficult access to the subjects makes it difficult to take specific samples. In any case, it is a cause for optimism that this is a living, breathing, active research group (a research group in which several young people are starting their scientific careers), because the authors have indicated in several studies that the results presented here are only partial results, or they described their further research plans. As a reviewer, I can only support and encourage further research, and I trust that the twin of this volume will be on the shelves soon.

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Author resumes

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Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar, Assistant Professor at Emilio Aguinaldo University, Cavite, Philippines, with an MA in Education and an MBA, is currently pursuing a PhD in Public Administration at Southern Philippine Academy University, Philippines. His research interests include education policy and management, culture and society, and organisational behaviour and policy.

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Chiao Li is a PhD candidate in comparative politics at the Centre for European Studies and comparative politics at Sciences Po in Paris, France where he previously completed a research MA on political behaviour. In his PhD thesis, he is analysing changes in voter turnout and party preferences in Europe, focusing on generational dynamics.

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Leanid Marozau is a Belarusian expert on international law and human rights. A former international secretary of the Belarusian National Youth Council RADA, he currently works as a legal advisor to Belarusian politician Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and is doing his PhD at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, on the development of youth rights in international systems.

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Ágnes Réka Dusa is a sociologist (MA specialising in youth sociology) and completed her doctorate at the University of Debrecen, Hungary, on international student mobility. She is a research analyst at the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families and continues to devote herself to research on young people.

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