



EURYKA

Reinventing Democracy in Europe: Youth Doing Politics in Times of Increasing Inequalities

**Second Policy Brief
(Deliverable 10.7)**

Workpackage 10: Communication

Workpackage Leading Institution: UNIGE

Submission due date: June 2018

Actual submission date: January 2019



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727025



EUROPEAN

POLICYBRIEF



REINVENTING DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE: YOUTH DOING POLITICS IN TIMES OF INCREASING INEQUALITIES

**Young People's Claims in the Media:
Evidence from Nine European Countries**

JANUARY 2019

INTRODUCTION

This study is conducted within EURYKA's Workpackage 2. It investigates how young people raise claims in the media against both inequalities and social and political exclusion in a context of austerity. It explores how young people's ways of doing politics are dealt with in the media and to what extent organized youth and contestation are visible in the public domain.

Applying the method of political claims analysis, we systematically study the actors intervening in public debates, the issues they address, their policy positions and the frames they advance.

The sources used in this study are daily newspapers (sometimes including tabloids), of as high a circulation as possible and of different political orientations, during the period of interest, with continuous coverage of the whole study period – i.e. from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2016. Five newspapers/tabloids are selected per country (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK), aiming at a representative and unbiased sample. Overall, we used national random samples of about 500 claims in each country.

Who talks about youth and at which level(s)?

- Our data show that when it comes to youth-related claims by all actors in the public sphere, *state actors are more prevalent* in all countries except France and Germany. Focusing on those claims raised only by youth actors, the data reveal the dominance of political youth groups and university students/young adults. When examining the spatial profile of the claimants, the importance of the subnational level is evident since education-related actors, youth actors and youth-related civil society organisations are more active at the local or regional level compared to other actors who have a national scope.

What issues are addressed by youth-related claims?

- Issues addressed by all actors relate mostly to education, welfare, social benefits and socioeconomic issues, as well as employment.
- However, turning to youth actors specifically, although they also focus primarily on education, for them political issues come second in frequency and these are raised by political youth groups. Reflecting austerity and inequality concerns, youth claimants in Greece score particularly highly in political issues while those in Spain and Italy show the highest score in education-related issues.

To whom are these claims addressed?

- The findings on addressees of all claims reveal the prevalence of state actors in France, Greece, Spain and the UK. Youth actors are also addressees of claims.
- Request addressees make up almost half (45%) of the addressees. Blamed addressees appear in about one third (34%) of all claims. It is noteworthy that political parties are the highest blamed addressee, followed by state actors.

How are youth-related claims made?

- When it comes to the form of youth-related claims by all actors, these are mostly verbal statements (60 to 80% national averages). This pattern changes when looking at claims by youth actors, with verbal statements being of lower frequency while much higher frequencies are noted in protest actions. Together with the higher rates of political participation issues raised by youth actors, these findings document that young Europeans are indeed more politically alert and active compared to the average claimant across the nine national public spheres.

The object of youth-related claims

- The findings show that when it comes to all claimants, the main objects are teenagers and school students. However, for youth claimants, university students and young adults are the main objects of their claims. Group-specific youth are more frequently the object of the claims raised by civil society organizations, whereas disadvantaged or marginalized youth are the objects of 'other actors' and youth-related civil society organisations.
- Most claims by all actors portray a positive evaluation towards the object. Reflecting the experiences of the economic crisis but also the migration crisis, the majority of claims by youth actors also reveal a pro-object position, with variations across-national contexts.

Framing inequalities

- Inequality frames appear in about one quarter of all claims made in the public sphere - with Switzerland and France recording the highest frequencies, while diagnostic and prognostic frames are of lower frequency. Reflecting the North-South divide, especially in the past

decade, South European countries come first in socio-economic and political inequality frames, whereas North European countries lead in discriminatory inequality frames.

Gender and political participation

- Young women are largely not visible within claims relating political participation and socioeconomic issues, among other 'high political' issues. This findings indicates that there is a low propensity to directly address young women in the public sphere, even on issues relating to their own interests. Regarding how young women are framed, Holecz and Smith have analysed claims made by, as well as addressed towards, young women, in the public sphere. They have observed that the issues of these claims relate largely to stereotypes, such as motherhood/ family planning and sexual themes including sexual health and sexual violence.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The overview of the findings show that the debate about youth in the nine European countries is mostly conducted by non-youth actors, who actually take decisions on youth issues. Stakeholders and politicians hold a big share of the public debate about youth and youth-related issues and thus have greater influence, but also greater responsibility regarding the unfolding of the debate. Only in France and Germany do the youth express their voices as equally as other actors.
- These findings reflect a combination of weak forms of youth organization as collective actors and the exclusion of youth from press reporting, which places emphasis on reporting decision makers. They also show that youth largely remain distant from conventional politics and do not engage in dialogue with other non-youth actors whose public claims bear on their interest.
- From a policy-making perspective, this suggests the need to provide incentives for youth participation in consultation processes related to youth policies, which presupposes that they are essentially considered to be key stakeholders in the issues that concern them.
- These findings also recommend that there is room for improvement of the communication channels between young actors and others. Therefore, press and media in general should support and give voice to representatives of youth in a series of issues that are important to them. Given the youth may opt for their own unconventional and digital media, their visibility in the public domain depends on how effective mainstream media professionals follow up the media which youth actors choose to express themselves.
- Our findings also demonstrate the importance of the subnational level, due to the dominance of subnational education-related actors, youth actors and youth-related civil society organisations. The salience of subnational actors indicates the necessity of developing context-specific policies and providing more opportunities for local initiatives of youth empowerment to flourish. Thus, policy makers should prioritize strengthening local structures and establish public deliberation at the local and neighbourhood level, thus ensuring that local voices will reach and inform decision-making processes at the aggregate/national level. Most important in this direction is the role played by local authorities, municipalities and prefectures, which are

responsible for facilitating communication between the various local groups towards more effective policy making at the local level.

- Our findings show that university students and young adults are the main objects of the claims raised by youth claimants. Thus, politicians should focus more on policies concerning young adults facing uncertainty and place emphasis on policies related to socioeconomic issues, as well as employment. Indeed, youth unemployment rates are still very high in the European Union. Policies aimed at facilitating the transition from education to work are therefore needed, especially in Southern countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy which record the highest youth unemployment rates.
- Regarding the issues addressed in the public sphere, the prevalence of education may be explained in terms of a gap between the policy-making processes and those whose lives are affected by these policies. More often, politicians introduce educational reforms and young people oppose them. This highlights the need to allow more time for public consultation before drafting educational policies. Public authorities should therefore promote youth participation practices, dedicate funding to support innovative proposals, create spaces of participation and dialogue, document and share good practices. In addition, there is a need to educate the different actors about what “new forms of participation” are and how they are important in the democratic process, with the aim of debunking mainstream conceptions of an “apolitical youth”.
- The fact that political issues are the second most discussed issue by youth actors demonstrates that young people are indeed interested in politics. In addition, the high rates observed in the adoption of contentious forms of political action by young actors indicate that youngsters, contrary to their frequent portrayal as a depoliticized generation, are engaged in political activity. Considering the adoption of new forms of youth political participation and the distancing of young people from party politics, there is a need to adopt more inclusive indicators of youth participation as well as to embrace new and alternative forms of youth political engagement, towards more inclusive models of political participation.
- The visibility of welfare issues in youth-related political claims may be seen, particularly in South European contexts, in relation to the implementation of austerity policies and the systematic abolition of social rights. Combined with the fact that risk groups (such as young individuals from low-skill backgrounds) tend to have reduced political efficacy and political participation, implementing social policies directed to young adults (the re-establishment of a social security net) is expected to increase youth participation in the democratic process, as well as to reduce generalized youth uncertainty.
- Finally, our data indicates numerous persisting inequalities in the visibility, addressing and framing of young women by collective actors via the printed media. As these inequalities are likely to negatively impact upon political participation, they need to be addressed. Politicians should focus on policies which encourage female participation, while paying special attention to gendered claims, which tend to exacerbate inequalities, when addressing young women.

EURYKA is a cross-national research project which aims to provide systematic and practice-related knowledge about how inequalities mediate youth political participation in nine European countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. EURYKA has three objectives:

- ▶ To provide systematic evidence on how inequalities are experienced and mediated by young people, exploring the coping mechanisms which are embedded in how they do politics. These coping mechanisms are manifested in multiple forms, i.e. as either political (dis)engagement and contestation online and offline or as (trans-) national democratic innovation and experimentation.
- ▶ To provide evidence on the conditions and causes underpinning youth political participation. This involves an examination of their values, expectations, and behaviours regarding democracy, power, politics, policymaking, social and political participation (online and offline).
- ▶ To make various novel suggestions to strengthen democratic life in Europe, with particular emphasis on those more inclusive for young people – and especially those with fewer opportunities.

The project's methodology has three main components:

- A multidimensional theoretical framework that combines macro-level (institutional), meso-level (organizational), and micro-level (individual) factors for explaining youth experience of inequalities and the differential aspects of how young people do politics in Europe.
- A cross-national comparative design that includes nine European countries with different degrees of exposure to inequalities and different policy regimes.
- An integrated methodological approach based on multiple methods of analysis, such as:

Policy analysis: Tracking public policies and practices which promote youth participation and inclusion in the nine countries as well as at the EU level.

Political claims analysis: Studying how young people and their particular ways of doing politics are dealt with in the media, as well as the presence of organized youth in the public domain.

Organizational analysis: Investigating youth political participation by examining the networks and (youth-led) organizations that are active in the fields of youth inclusion, participation, national and transnational democratic innovation and experimentation.

Panel survey analysis: Conducting a panel survey in all the nine countries to collect information on young people's values, expectations, and behaviours regarding democracy, power, politics, policy-making.

Experimental analysis: Conducting survey experiments to capture young people's experience of inequalities and their support for social and political change to strengthen democratic life in Europe.

Biographical analysis: Conducting biographical interviews with young people to collect information on the individual trajectories of young people since their childhood and how inequalities impact young people's ways of doing politics.

Social media analysis: Investigating youth political participation online and the impact of inequalities on this by examining the use young people make of social media and how digital participation and representation may (or may not) provide the seeds for reinvigorating democracy in Europe.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME Reinventing Democracy in Europe: Youth Doing Politics in Times of Increasing Inequalities (EURYKA)

COORDINATOR Prof. Marco Giugni, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland, marco.giugni@unige.ch

CONSORTIUM

- European Alternatives, London, United Kingdom
- SciencesPo, Paris, France
- Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy
- Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain
- University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece
- University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland
- University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom
- University of Siegen, Siegen, Germany
- University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland
- Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

FUNDING SCHEME Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies", call REV-INEQUAL-05-2016, topic: "Inequalities in the EU and their consequences for democracy, social cohesion and inclusion"

DURATION February 2017 – January 2020 (36 months).

BUDGET EU contribution: 2,595,720.00 €.

WEBSITE www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/euryka/home

FOR MORE INFORMATION Dr Maria Kousis (University of Crete), kousis.m@uoc.gr
Mathilde Brunet (University of Geneva), mathilde.brunet@unige.ch

FURTHER READING EURYKA Integrated Report on Policy Analysis (Deliverable 2.2) prepared by the University of Crete project team. Available at the project website: <https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/euryka/outputs/deliverables/>

Disclaimer

The content of this policy brief does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed therein lies entirely with the author.