Contract No 826686

Deliverable D4.6.

Policy Recommendations

AIT Austrian Institute of Technology

POLITIKOS – Wir müssen reden!

E-Riigi Akadeemia Sihtasutus

Centre for Economics and Public Administration Ltd

Document control information

Title	Deliverable D4.6. ("Policy Recommendations")
Editor	Radu-Antonio Serrano-Iova
Contributors	Kristina Reinsalu, PhD Liia Hänni, PhD
Description	Policy recommendations related to the EMY project.
Classification	☐ **Red** – Highly sensitive information, limited access for: ☐ **Yellow** – restricted limited access for: ☐ **Green** – restricted to consortium members ☒ White – public
Reviewers	☐ AIT ☒ CEPA ☐ eGA ☒ Politikos
Review status	☐ Draft ☒ WP Manager accepted ☒ Co-ordinator accepted
Action requested	☐ to be revised by Partners involved in the preparation of the Project Deliverable ☐ to be reviewed by applicable EMY Partners ☐ for approval of the WP Manager ☐ for approval of the Project Coordinator
Requested deadline	31/12/2020

Versions

Version	Date	Change	Comment/Editor
1.0	15.06.2020	Initial structure draft	Radu-Antonio Serrano-Iova (eGA)
2.0	30.11.2020	Additions to Content	Radu-Antonio Serrano-Iova (eGA)
3.0	17.12.2020	Restructure of the draft	Radu-Antonio Serrano-Iova (eGA)
3.0	18.01.2021	Draft reviewed, comments added	J. Ignacio Criado, Ph.D. (external reviewer)
Final Version	26.01.2021	Comments incorporated	Radu-Antonio Serrano-Iova (eGA)

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Introduction

The overall objective of the project Empowerment of mobile youth in the EU (EMY) is to increase the involvement of mobile EU youth in the political and social life of the host country. The EMY project is about bringing EU citizenship to life, in particular for young voters. EU citizenship is much more than a fictional concept or an imprint on our passports. Under the Treaty on the European Union all EU citizens have the right to vote, and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament in their home country or, alternatively, in any other country in the EU where they reside ('host country'). Thereby EMY aims to (a) identify ways of fostering and supporting democratic participation of mobile EU youth, (b) increase awareness about opportunities and entry points to expand political and social participation of mobile youth, (c) specify and develop methods and tools that support democratic participation of mobile EU youth. To achieve those aims, EMY project partners have implemented various mapping and interaction activities, and this input is used for **policy recommendations** presented in this Deliverable**.**

The objective of Deliverable D4.6 is to present the prepared draft policy and practice recommendations for improving engagement of mobile EU students in political and social life of host countries. This action will capitalise on the results of interaction activities to draft policy and practice recommendations for the improvement of political engagement of mobile students as EU citizens. The policy recommendations were developed aiming at national and European governing bodies responsible for and dealing with youth mobility for broader and sustainable transnational engagement of young people across the EU.

As the project proposal prescribes, this deliverable will provide a combined view of both **Austria** and **Estonia.** To better understand the essence of such policies from the **decision-making perspective**, interviews were organised with respective government and university officials to reflect upon the normative side of stronger engagement of mobile students and citizens more generally. Various tools of desktop analysis were applied to understand the results of mapping surveys, focus-group and public discussions, interviews, as well as to reveal the patterns of digital presence and interaction of mobile youth on social media. Parallel and identical activities were implemented in the project use case countries - Estonia and Austria - by consortium partners (see Deliverable D4.4 and D4.5 for an overview of the Austrian and Estonian activities, respectively.).

1 Basis of the Recommendations

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Problem definition

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) gives EU citizens the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in their Member State of residence under the same conditions as nationals of that State. However, this right is not exercised fully by EU citizens, even though Europeans have become more aware of their rights (EU Citizenship Report 2017, p. 17). One difficulty mobile EU citizens are facing relates to the fact that electoral systems are not fully harmonised across the EU. Lack of information and technical and administrative issues seem to be another barrier for mobile EU citizens. In response to these and other shortcomings, Member States have been called upon to promote political engagement by better informing citizens, in particular mobile EU citizens of their rights to vote and removing barriers for their participation (EU Citizenship Report 2017).

The apparent lack of democratic engagement among young Europeans has been researched as well. Limited information, educational deficits, unemployment, social exclusion, and low overall levels of trust in government (OECD 2015, Government at a Glance) and in the EU institutions have been highlighted variously as the main contributing factors. However, much of academic research and observation point out that university students are among the most socially and politically active youth groups. At the same time, young people are the most mobile group living in large numbers outside their host countries, especially for studying.

The EMY (Engagement of Mobile Youth) project seeks to address the following problems:

1. Young mobile citizens in the EU do not fully exercise their rights to engage in political life at the EU and local levels in the country they live in; this is on the one hand due to barriers caused by administrative practices and technical obstacles, on the other hand due to the lack of information and/or access to it (including cross-border) regarding the political life in fellow EU countries, i.e. more and better quality political information on the EU through media and the internet is required, not only from the home country but also from other EU countries;

2. Young people are least engaged in traditional political participation practices; in this context the promotion of awareness about EU citizenship and the values attached to it is vital, including for those reaching voting age;

3. Issues such as perceived lack of information and transparency, lack of trust and "the feeling of not being heard" are not sufficiently addressed;

4. Expectations about innovative political engagement practices supported by appropriate digital tools are not met;

5. University Student Unions are the actual working space where young people can demonstrate their social and politic activism by participating in numerous university-related activities in general and in particular in experiencing democratic voting when selecting students' representative;

6. Students pro-actively use social media and other digital networking technologies to support their activism, to inform others and be informed by seeking important for them information;

7. Mobile EU students represent a substantial section of young people overall measuring in hundreds of thousands across the EU Member States, including via European mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, Dora Plus programme.

Since the start of the project, an EP Election took place, a municipal election was held in Austria, and a new EU Citizenship Report has been published. "*The 2019 European Parliament elections saw the highest turnout of the last two decades. The increase in turnout was driven by young and first-time voters*" (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 11). This new Report also states that it is estimated that from the 17 million mobile EU citizens (both young and aged), 15 million were eligible to vote, but few of them exercised this right (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 12). Similarly, the turnout of mobile citizens to vote and stand as candidates in municipal and EP elections has been categorized as lower than that of nationals. Barriers identified include, but are not limited to, complicated registration processes and insufficient voting options (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 13). While not a panacea, online tools can facilitate the democratic participation of individuals in current times (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 18).

1.1.2 Target group

As Deliverable D2.1. outlines, the project's **principal target group** consists of mobile EU students in Austria and Estonia, i.e. students from other EU countries who are resident in Austria and Estonia to pursue their academic studies. However, since the circumstances of students in higher education (such as their motivation for travelling and staying abroad and the time limitation of their stay) are quite specific, the project also seeks to address an **extended target group** of mobile EU citizens who are not university students. The project's extended target group therefore also includes students who attend vocational and professional education; employees on temporary workplace postings abroad; and employees who are posted outside of their home-country permanently. As presented in Deliverable D2.3. as of 01 January 2020, Austria had 757,420 registered residents from other EU member states, of which 246,000 were young persons between the ages of 15 and 34 years. Similarly, this number in Estonia was 20,883, of which 8,662 were between the ages of 15 and 34 years (Deliverable D2.3. p. 10).

EMYs are not a monolithic target group: they comprise a number of disparate sub-groups that are differentiated, among other factors, by age, country of origin, level and place of study or occupation, and duration of stay (Figure 1). We assume that, while the heterogeneous nature of the target group has a direct impact on the design process for the online tool and for the recommendations, it is equally important to find commonalities in order for our propositions and tools to be universally acceptable. These should be common to any EMY sub-group, whereas the content type may still differ in some respects.
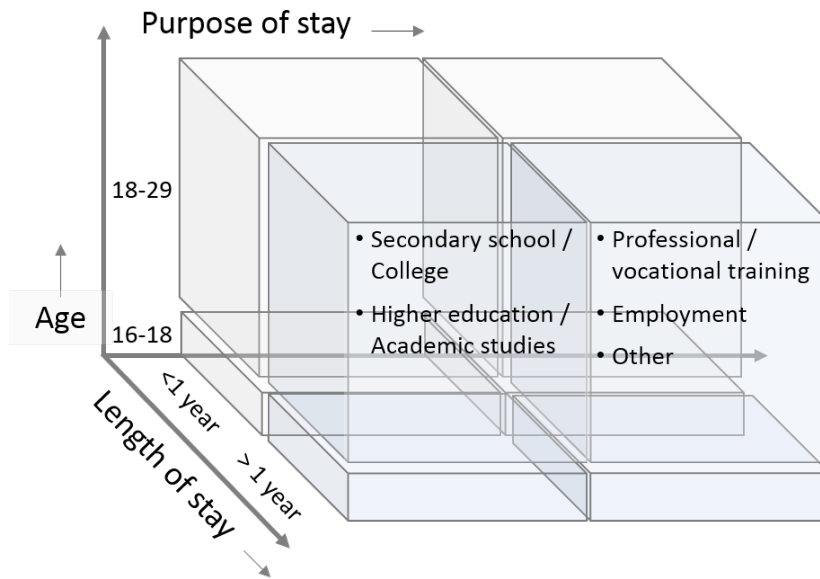
Figure 1 Structure of Target Community

1.2 Overview of Stakeholders

In line with the guiding materials provided in WP 2 (Deliverable D2.1, stakeholder mapping overview and interview guide), the stakeholder mapping was conducted for both use case countries during the period 1st of February to 15th of April 2019. It has to be stressed that this activity is an on-going process and the corresponding stakeholder lists will be supplemented with new contacts and information until the end of project implementation.

The stakeholders have been previously identified in Deliverable D4.1. and categorised in Deliverable D2.1. Figure 2 summarizes Annex 1 of D2.1.

Type	Existence at the local level	Existence at the EU level	Relevance to Principal target group	Relevance to Extended target group
Student unions	X	X	X	
Public/private bodies dealing with student mobility (incl. Erasmus+)	X	X	X	X
Local international student offices at individual universities	X		X	
Secondary schools	X	X		X
Host-country political parties, communities and local administration	X		X	X
Bodies dealing with elections (national, regional, local)	X	X	X	X

Bodies dealing with education (national, regional, local)	X		X	X
Other relevant multipliers (e.g. youth organisations, other NGOs) other civil society organisations, relevant project environments, political parties, MEPs, think tanks; media, etc.)	X	X	X	X

Figure 2 Stakeholders and their Relevance to the Project's Target Groups

Once the key stakeholders were mapped, meetings and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders were conducted based on the interview guide elaborated under WP2 (Deliverable D2.1.) with the following objectives: 1) to disseminate information about the project and its activities; 2) to ask for a stakeholder's opinion and experience regarding the political and social engagement of the target group; and 3) to investigate the stakeholder's potential role in the support of democratic participation of the target group in the host countries. Furthermore, stakeholders were asked to share the project outcomes (i.e. video material, surveys, invitations to focus groups and other future project activities and outcomes) through their communication channels. Stakeholders were also asked to provide relevant data (for instance, essential descriptive statistics of the target group) where and if available.

In first stage of the project (until 15.04.2019), **12 meetings** (face-to-face or skype-meetings) had been conducted and several contacts have been established with representatives of stakeholders in Estonia. And in parallel, **15 meetings** (face-to-face or via teleconference) had been conducted and several contacts have been established with representatives of stakeholders in Austria.

As noted earlier, stakeholder consultation is a continuous process, and several online meetings have been additionally taken place in 2020. There were mainly focused for the organization of different crowdsourcing events that serve to validate post-election results, the pilot EMY Connect tool and the draft policy recommendations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the majority of these meetings were conducted via teleconference or Skype.

In Estonia, the key stakeholders identified and discussed were:

- o Ministry of Education and Research
- o Ministry of Internal Affairs
- o State Electoral Office
- o Archimedes Foundation
- o European Parliament Bureau in Estonia
- o Erasmus Student Network
- o Youth for Understanding (YFU)
- o Estonian National Student Union
- o Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech)
- o Erasmus Student Network of Tallinn University of Technology International Club (ESN TalTech IC)

- o Tallinn University
- o Student Union of Tallinn University
- o University of Tartu
- o Student Council of the University of Tartu
- o International Student Ambassadors of the University of Tartu
- o Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

In Austria, some of the key stakeholders identified were:

- o Ministry of Education and Research
- o School Board Vienna (Stadtschulrat Wien)
- o Federal Election Authority, Ministry of the interior (Bundeswahlbehörde BMI)
- o ÖH-Austrian National Student Union, International Office
- o The European Law Students' Association Austria (ELSA Austria)
- o Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales (AIESEC Austria)
- o Federal Youth Representation (BJV)
- o Young European Federalists (JEF)
- o Austrian Medical Student Association (AMSA)
- o Business School - WU Vienna International Office
- o MCI MANAGEMENT CENTER INNSBRUCK
- o International Relations Office Uni Innsbruck
- o University of Graz
- o Office for International Relations Uni Graz
- o European Parliament Representation in Austria
- o European Youth Parliament Austria
- o PR Party SPÖ Social Democratic Party of Austria
- o PR Party ÖVP Austrian People's Party
- o JVP - die junge Volkspartei (Young division - Austrian People's Party)
- o SJ - Sozialistische Jugend (Young division - Social Democratic Party of Austria)
- o IZ -Verein zur Förderung von Vielfalt, Dialog und Bildung

For the full list of stakeholders and a more extensive explanation, please consult Deliverable D2.1.

1.3 Working Assumptions

Researchers and policymakers conclude that young people's disappointing participation in the polls cannot be blamed solely on political apathy. Throughout the project we have examined several other explanatory factors, including social and cultural aspects, such as home-country bias, information and communication deficits, and administrative barriers. These relevant assumptions have been explained in detail in Deliverable D2.1. and listed below.

---

1) Political apathy
   a) General lack of interest in politics
   b) General lack of confidence in political process and institutions (*"my vote does not matter"*)

---

2) Home-country bias
   a) General lack of interest in the EU
   b) Lack of confidence in EU institutions (*"my vote only matters in my home country"*)
   c) Lack of confidence in effectiveness of EU policymaking (*"does not make a difference to me"*)
   d) Lack of interest in host-country engagement (e.g. absence of long-term perspective)
   e) Preference for home-country engagement (cultural bias or pragmatic)

---

3) Information deficits
   a) General lack of knowledge about EU (activities, direct relevance)
   b) Lack of knowledge about citizen rights (e.g. right to vote in the host-country)
   c) Lack of knowledge about specific requirements (residence), voting procedures (registration, polling)
   d) Lack of knowledge about (host-country) parties/candidates and politics

---

4) Communication deficits
   a) Language barriers
   b) Other (cultural, social) difficulties to engage with/integrate in the host-county
   c) Communication channel mismatch (online/offline, use of media and other communication channels)
   d) failure to capture the target group's attention / failure to penetrate "filter bubbles"

---

5) Administrative barriers
   a) Member-state conditions for eligibility to vote / stand as a candidate
   b) Member-state formal requirements and procedures for voter registration
   c) Member-state implementation of the polling process (e.g. availability of e-voting or postal voting)

1.4 Key Findings

In the relation to the working assumptions, the pre- and post-election mapping and interaction activities in both Austria and Estonia have revealed the following **key findings:**

- The assumption of a **general lack of interest in politics** has not been significant but observed in some very minor instances. Participants in the post-election mapping activities have increasingly shown that EMYs are interested in participating in democratic life at both EU and local level (based on their turnout in the 2019 EP elections and their interest in various political topics). There have been cases of specific political apathy toward a host-country's political affairs, mostly due to the other working assumptions discussed below. Throughout all the activities, no participant has ever shown a **general lack of trust in political processes and institutions**. This is indicated by the political discussion topics they would like the institutions to focus on, and their continuous desire to receive relevant, real-life evidence that their votes can make a difference in EU politics and in the local community, in order to become more actively engaged in the political aspects of the EU and their host-countries.

- On the other hand, home-country bias has been strongly identified. Inside this assumption, the sub-assumption of a **general lack of interest in the EU** has not been associated to the participants of the mapping and interaction activities (the majority of the participants considered themselves citizens of the EU in different degrees). **Lack of confidence in the EU institutions** has been partially identified, describing the EU as a "*cold entity*" or a "*big machine… on another level*". Rather than lack of confidence, participants communicated the complexity and lack of communication or the fact that its information does not reach citizens through the national levels. Which in turn also lead to some **lack of confidence in effectiveness of EU policymaking**. The **lack of interest in host-country engagement**, specifically the absence of long-term perspective, has been echoed by both EMYs and stakeholders. Most of the reasons have been pragmatic in nature, such as EMYs limited stay and lack of time. **Preference for home-country engagement** due to either cultural bias or pragmatism, appears to be the most prevalent sub-assumption. Preference for home-country candidates has been explained due to habitual and even strategic reasons, in addition to lack of awareness of the possibility of voting for a candidate from the EU host country, as well as complex registration procedures.

- **Information deficits** also have been identified. A **lack of knowledge about the EU** has been identified. Most participants were aware of the upcoming 2019 EP elections, but that was it; few participants knew of or had used existing EU-level participatory platforms and tools. The **lack of knowledge about citizen rights** was also present. The majority of participants were aware of their voting rights in the EP, however, in the opposite cases, the insufficient identification with the EU and the imperceptible communication of the EU institutions were some of the reasons. A majority of participants were also aware of their rights to vote in local government elections in the host-country. The **lack of knowledge about specific requirements and voting procedures** has been represented by accounts of insufficient information on voting requirements and procedures being barriers. While EMYs request easier access to such information, some stakeholders counter with the fact that citizens also have an

active duty to search for electoral information in a proactive way. The **lack of knowledge about host-country parties/candidates and politics** has also been present. On the other hand, even if the person contains a high level of knowledge about the host-country's politics, and/or has actively participated in the past in such activities, the home-country bias prevails, due to pragmatism, length of stay in the host country, and the language barrier.

- The activities have also shown the existence of **communication deficits**. According to MEPs, the EU has difficulty in relating to EU citizens directly as its direct impact is often overshadowed by the much stronger presence of member states. In addition to this, the **language barrier** has been heavily reflected throughout the course of the project's activities. The language issue is additionally compounded by a failure of stakeholders to capture the target group's attention. **Other cultural or social difficulties to engage with people or integrate in the host-county** have not been significantly represented by a common topic. For example, student unions mostly focus on engagement between internationals (without differentiating between EU and non-EU citizens, short or long-term students). **Communication channel mismatch** has not been highly encountered. In most cases, stakeholders use the communications channels that EMY use. Nevertheless, the latter usually prefer not to conduct discussions about politics issues online. The **failure to capture the target group's attention or failure to penetrate "filter bubbles"** has been observed and acknowledged by the stakeholders and participants. On one hand, both working and student EMYs are finding themselves in a bubble with their international peers. On the other, politicians do not consider EMYs as an election target group because they assume that they will not vote in their host country anyway, and do not want to spend such resources without an expected return.

- The final working assumption deals with the **administrative barriers.** There is no mismatch between a **member-state's conditions for eligibility to vote or stand as a candidate** for nationals and those for citizens from another EU countries. Nevertheless, communication deficits and any of the previous factors might come in play, and thus impact political participation. A **member-state's formal requirements and procedures for voter registration** vary from country to country and have been highly referenced throughout the project. Once these are compounded with any prior deficits, participants will be affected. Some MEPs confirmed in interviews that they support a harmonization of national election procedures but admit that it is not realistic to achieve this goal since the sovereignty of the member states is important and elections are in the competence of the member states. Finally, **member-state implementation of the polling process** may also be either a barrier or an enabler. Bureaucratic procedures in conjunction with unreal deadlines may impede mobile citizens to vote. Electronic voting (and specifically remote Internet voting) has been presented as a possible solution and enabler. However, its implementation in turn requires both technological and socio-political prerequisites.

The previous key findings were tailored to the working assumptions. However, throughout the project activities, other important findings were uncovered.

- It has been very difficult to reach, let alone mobilise the age group of 16-18 year-old "first time voters". Participants have also tended to agree that the extension of voting rights to this age group could potentially be very valuable in raising awareness, fostering the political discourse and promoting democratic engagement already at a young age. Adequate civic education is critical for making this approach a success.

- EMYs usually look to host-country and, to a lesser extent, home-county authorities and stakeholders for information and guidance on how to exercise their right to democratic participation. Host-country authorities and stakeholders, by contrast, expect EMYs to be proactive and demonstrate a certain level of civic commitment, e.g. by taking the initiative and looking for relevant information themselves. The broader debate about "push vs. pull" is largely outside the scope of this Project, but nonetheless, it would be important to explore and take into consideration.

- Participant EMYs demonstrated a two-dimensional attitude towards the EU and EU citizenship (3.1.3 above). The respondents seem to be comfortable with the notions of home country citizenship and even, at a more abstract level, EU citizenship. However, most of the time, EMYs appear to view their experience of living in another EU member state through the prism of a fairly narrow home-/host-country perspective. It seems that shared EU citizenship does not fully engender a shared sense of belonging: the host-country, and its population of "fellow EU citizens", is not consciously part of what is thought of as „the EU".

For more detailed information on all of these key findings and more, please consult Deliverables D2.2. and D2.3.

1.5 e-Participation Platforms and Tools

1.5.1 Current state and gap analysis

Deliverable D3.1 is presented a comprehensive analysis of e-participation platforms and tools for EU citizens, in general, and young people aged 16 to 29, in particular. The review included 30 platforms among which some have a pan-European reach and others are specific to the two target countries of this project, Austria and Estonia. Platforms in this sample were selected according to their capacity to:

- raise awareness about EU citizenship rights;
- encourage political engagement among EU citizens, in general, and young mobile citizens, in particular; and
- enable mobile EU citizens to directly engage in civic and political participation by (a) connecting and networking digitally; b) receiving and exchanging relevant information across borders; and c) exercising their civic rights, online and off-line.

1.5.1.1 Current situation

The current state of affairs regarding e-participation platforms and tools is developed extensively in Deliverable D3.1. For the purposes of this deliverable it has been summarized by the following statements:

- the availability of information describing many different opportunities that potentially exist for public participation in general abounds, which creates serious challenges of finding specific information that would meet the needs of European mobile youth;
- such needs cannot be clearly identified and systematised by analysing the available resources;
- no dedicated resource exists to meet special needs of mobile youth in connection with democratic participation.

1.5.1.2 Gaps identified

The research of the current situation brought to light multiple identifiable gaps, applicable to the context of receiving information, of our target groups possibility to connect digitally and other general topics. These in turn became the basis of the user requirements of our proposed tool (discussed in the net section). Some of these gaps have been listed below.

- The EMY community is fragmented and dispersed; information needs are quite granular and differ for host country;
- Relevance of the information provided for the target group varies;
- Information that is relevant for the target group is difficult to identify;
- Mobile EU citizens are a relatively small subset of the voting population in their host country whose specific information needs regarding political participation go largely unmet;
- Data sources, and their credibility, are not always obvious on websites and platforms;
- No linkage across different communication channels or between platforms is offered except for social media plugins;
- Technologies to connect communities with ownership and transparency are not offered.

For the full research, list of gaps and their explanations, please consult Deliverable D3.1.

1.5.2   Proposed tool: emyConnect

'emyConnect' (Deliverable D3.3.) is a proposed online tool, which will be prototyped with the principal objective of encouraging participation of EMYs in formal democratic events, specifically European Parliament and municipal elections. The tool will achieve this by providing categories of EMYs with targeted and regularly updated information about opportunities for democratic participation and civic engagement in their host country. It has been designed as being modular and scalable, with its first iteration focusing initially on European Parliament and host-country municipal elections. The tool has been named emyConnect to illustrate the need to digitally bridge the multiple disconnects with the host country's social and political life that EMYs experience on an every-day basis when living there. Primarily, emyConnect will be built to connect EMYs:

a) to the information they need to become more socially and politically active;
b) to the relevant for them stakeholders that will be the source of such information; and
c) to one another for mutual support and experience sharing.

For more information please consult Deliverables D3.1. and D3.3.

1.5.2.1   *User requirements of emyConnect*

The user requirements for 'emyConnect' are broadly defined (in Deliverable D3.1) as certain information needs and communication practices undertaken by EMYs, including the use of channels, tools and also the way EMYs interact with digital communication technology in general, and specific devices in particular. These requirements are a set of conditions covering information as a public good, specific content that young Europeans have or might need, to be more democratically active when living in other European countries, and a range of digital communication technologies that may assist in meeting these information needs by informing the design and implementation of the EMY engagement tool. A particular emphasis is placed on digital communication technologies due to their potential for expanding participation opportunities and because young people in particular, are native users of these technologies and tend to engage more actively when they are able to use digital communication channels.

Some of the information (or content-related) needs have been summarized as follow:
- Information (content) should be tailored to meet EMYs needs.
- Care should be taken to identify and address latent and known, information needs.
- Information should be presented in an interactive format and respond to specific questions in a way that is simple and easy to understand.
- Information should be presented in an accessible and, wherever possible entertaining way
- Online activities aimed at EMYs should go hand in hand with a broader effort across member states to strengthen civic education as an integral part of their secondary-school curricula, in particular with respect to the EU and EU citizenship.

On the other hand, the communication channel requirements are:
- The use of mobile communication devices, in particular smartphones, should be prioritised.

- Channels should enable a proactive ("push") approach.
- To reduce hurdles to adoption a chatbot that can be integrated with existing, popular communication platforms appears preferable to a dedicated smartphone app.
- High-quality information that is already available elsewhere, should be 'mobilised', and integrated wherever possible.

For the full list of requirements and their explanations, please consult Deliverable D2.4.

1.5.2.2 Functionality and design

Based on the requirements and current trends in digital media development, 'emyConnect' would be:

- designed primarily for use on smartphones;
- implemented in the form of a chatbot that automatically and regularly connects to the information source(s) and transmits it to EMYs' smartphones;
- capable of aggregating information from existing, trusted sources, in particular directly from public authorities and other stakeholders, such as selected non-governmental organisations and neutral experts, in addition to content created by the 'curator';
- designed to allow for moderation, vetting and quality control by a designated 'curator';
- able to organize and support regular exchanges (chats) among EMYs, with a view to creating sustainable online communities.

For more information please consult Deliverables D3.1. and D3.3.

2   Analysis of Key Findings

The main targeted population for this project are the European Mobile Youth (EMYs) and their involvement in the political and social life of the host country. The design method and process for Policy Recommendations is captured by Figure 3.
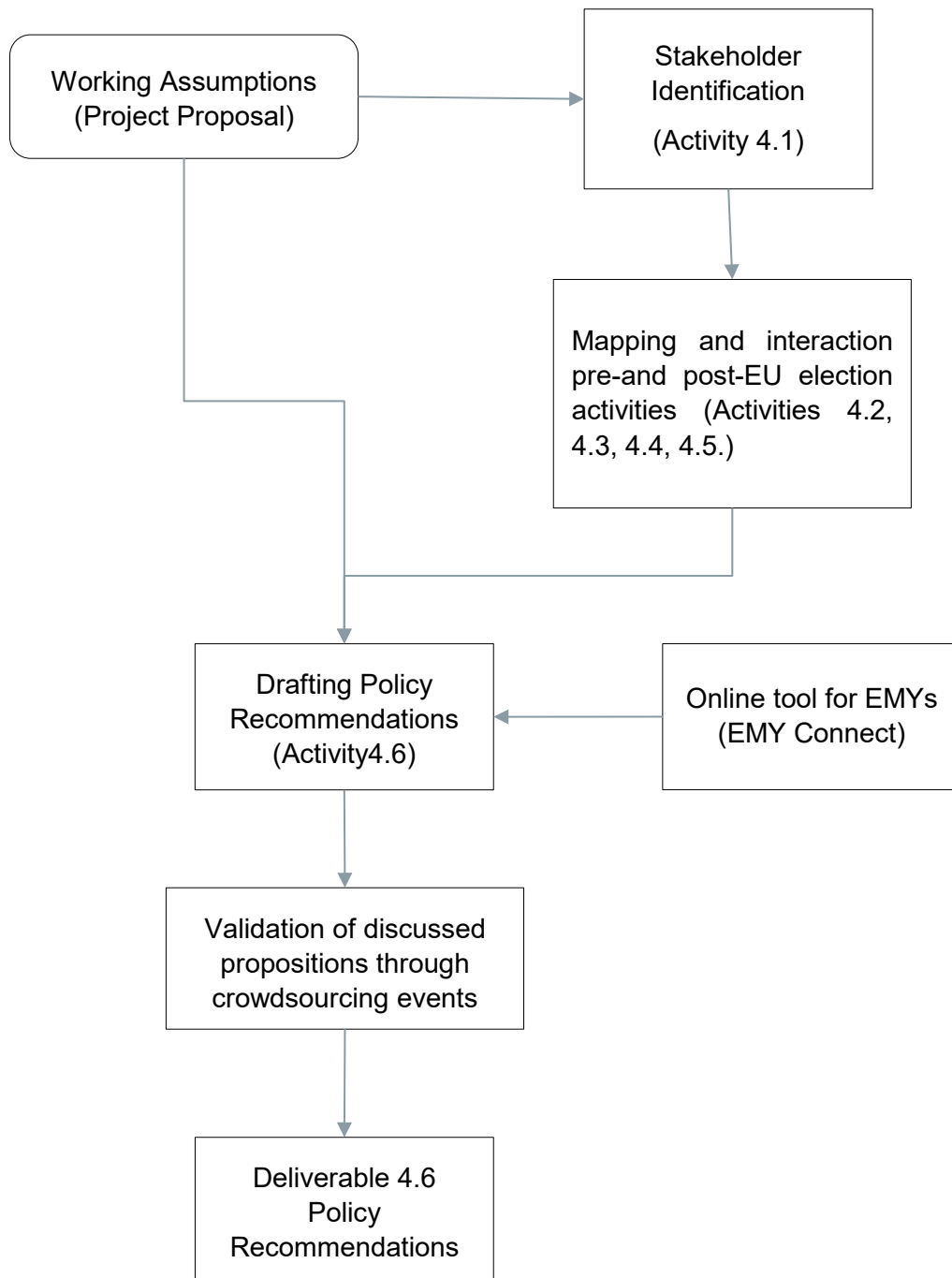
Figure 3 Drafting process of the Policy Recommendations

In order to fully understand what the barriers and drivers for political and social engagement of our target group are, and to test our assumptions (see Chapters 1.1 and 1.3 in this Document), we completed set of identifying and mapping activities both in Austria and Estonia:

- **Identification of target groups and key stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities in each use case country which was done as activity 4.1.** This activity focused on establishing contacts with Student Unions of participating, representatives with local political community, relevant government and university bodies responsible for mobile students from the EU and schools in the case of Austria.

- **Mapping and interaction pre-and post-EU election activities implemented in Austria and Estonia** (surveys, focus groups and public discussions / crowdsourcing and interviews) which were completed **as activities 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5.**

The key findings (see Chapter 1.4) resulted from activities listed above formed the main bases for the discussed propositions. In short, the **key findings** corresponding to the **working assumptions** presented earlier in current document (see the 1.3) are:

- **Political Apathy**: not conclusively confirmed + 'self-selection bias';

- **Home-country bias**: strong evidence;

- **Information deficits**: recurring theme;

- **Communication deficits**: recurring theme;

- **Administrative barriers**: recurring theme;

As we can conclude, the biggest barriers are concerning administrative procedures or information and communication gaps between different stakeholders and EMYs. Therefore, the focus is also on these, more practical aspects and steps to be taken by various stakeholders and less on social, cultural, political aspects which have not been proved to be as decisive as assumed and which are harder to address by stakeholders of this project.

The following nineteen (19) **discussed propositions** have been drafted from a more general perspective (the EU level) to a more specific perspective (the national level and the country as a host to EMYs). Subsequently, they have been grouped according to overarching topics, which in turn were the seeds for the policy recommendations. Each discussed proposition presents an explanation prior to its introduction and that target stakeholders to which it is address. Finally, these propositions formed the basis of the proposed policy recommendations presented in Chapter 3.

2.1 Discussed Propositions: Harmonization

As an individual member-state's formal requirements and procedures for voter registration and election participation vary from country to country, there is a strong recommendation to harmonize the procedure itself and also its communication to EMYs. However, we understand that it might not be easy to achieve this goal, since the sovereignty of the member states is important and the handling of elections is under the purview of the individual member states.

On the other hand, attempts could be undertaken to specify and harmonize the concept of voting rights and the right to stand as a candidate in host-countries specifically. Currently it is a bit confusing when it comes to EP elections and every MS has different election systems. For example, Estonia has an open list system and most other EU countries have a closed one. In case the citizen of another country gets a good position in the party, they might get elected eventually, but in the Estonian context this is impossible. Therefore, the appropriate proposition targets the relevant EU Institutions and Member States.

1. **Further attempts to harmonize electoral systems (for EP elections) throughout the EU should be made.**
   Target stakeholders: Relevant EU Institutions, Member States

Additionally, at the EU level and specifically regarding to home-country bias, EMYs pointed out that a clear division and continuous tensions between EU countries (e.g. the North versus South dimension). Thus, it is very logical that EMYs would try to support their home candidate at the EP elections as the former assume that the latter represents better the interests of their home country in the EP. An overarching recommendation would be to increase the solidarity at EU level, however, this is very hard to achieve practically. The resulting proposition focuses on transnational parties. Nevertheless, there is a big cap how MEPs in Estonia and in Austria see the question of cross-EU parties. Whereas the Austrian MEPs mostly supported the idea, the Estonian MEPs were strongly against cross-EU parties. Nonetheless, the following proposition encourages the exploration and implementation of the idea.

2. **Participation of transnational parties should be encouraged and corresponding legal restrictions removed.**
   Target stakeholders: Relevant EU Institutions, Member States

At the national level, EMYs have encountered several difficulties and barriers preventing and even stalling them from participating. Authorities from both home- and host-countries should be made aware of these obstacles in order to have a clearer understanding of the source of the problems and find effective solutions. Opening communications between the EMYs and the authorities in order to resolve such issues results in the following proposition.

3. **Awareness should be raised among officials and representatives of public authorities of the problems encountered by EU citizens regarding democratic participation when they go to live in another member state, temporarily or permanently.**
   Target stakeholders: National Policymakers, European Commission, European Parliament

An additional discrepancy identified among the case countries resulted in the identification that EMYs might not be able to participate in all the elections at different administrative levels. Once

again, the sovereignty of the member states is important and the handling of elections is under the purview of the individual member states. Though, it is still important to strive toward harmonization, therefore the following proposition explores this issue.

4. **Electoral rights of mobile EU citizens should be extended to all levels of government (EU, national, regional).**
   <u>Target stakeholders:</u> National and Local Level Policymakers

Having acknowledged the existence of barriers and issues, a possible solution would be for member states to work on and elaborate a unified template on how the electoral offices need to present information. Such a standardized template would be useful and applicable for both EP elections and national elections. With homogenous templates, even the language barrier difficulties might subside, since the interested parties would know where exactly in the template to find the information they wish and directly translate it, without having to scan a whole document to do so.

5. **EU member states should assist EMYs to better understand the administrative mechanisms (e.g. residence, voter registration) necessary to participate in elections and other forms of democratic engagement.**
   <u>Target stakeholders:</u> National and Local Policymakers, European Commission, European Parliament

These discussions and their corresponding recommendation echoes the explanations and endeavours delineated in the EU Citizenship Report 2020. While the topic of harmonization itself is not discussed in the Report,

> *"[t]he Commission intends to update the relevant directives to strengthen mobile citizens' ability to exercise their electoral rights. This would involve updating, clarifying and strengthening the rules in order to ensure that they support the broad and inclusive participation of mobile EU citizens. Areas to be covered include the provision of targeted information to mobile EU citizens - including on the deadlines, the implications and durability of voter registrations, the exchange of information on the registration of mobile EU citizen voters and candidates in European elections, and the necessary adjustments following Brexit."* (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 13)

This is further illustrated through Action 1 (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 15). Nevertheless, we believe this to be in the lower end of what might be considered sufficient and recommend harmonization throughout the EU, in our first policy recommendation (Chapter 3).

2.2 Discussed Propositions: Mobility

Although we identified that the interest and motivation to be engaged is mostly biased toward an EMYs home-country, the majority of the participants considered themselves citizens of the EU in different degrees. Thus, the focus of multinational activities and exchanges should be strengthened. Nevertheless, these programs should not only focus on mobility, but also deal with civic and political engagement in those host-countries. Funding could be made available, conditional to such extended activities. In this idea, Civil Society Organizations that work with democratic engagement throughout the EU could also benefit from such advantages for any mobility programs or projects that they might implement.

6. **Existing or new innovative mobility programs should receive more funds, not only to promote mobility per se but also to encourage host-country engagement.**
   Target stakeholders: EU Institutions

On the national perspective, EMYs would like information about the democratic participation in the host-country to be provided in a more proactive manner (e.g. as part of 'freshmen weeks' or 'starter packs' for new Erasmus students arriving in their host country). However, until practical/everyday concerns of how to manage their life in host-countries (e.g. get medical assistance, obtain the necessary permits, transportation options, etc.) are met, the expectations for EMYs' engagement in social and political life are quite unrealistic. Thus, the 'welcome package' should also include basic information necessary for everyday life. 'Farewell packages' were also discussed, under the topic that once a mobility program is over, or it is ending, the host-country, through the respective stakeholders, should provide important information about procedures for exiting the country (e.g. notifying city hall or any of the respective authorities) or for staying in the country (e.g. documentation required, work possibilities, etc.). This last idea could be explored through other projects.

7. **Information about democratic participation in the host country should be provided in a more proactive manner, e.g. a 'welcome package' distributed to all new EMYs arriving in their host country.**
   Target stakeholders: National and Local Level Policymakers in Member States, Civil Society Organizations, Youth Organizations, Erasmus+ Institutions, Relevant Public Authorities in Member States, Educational Institutions, Chambers of Labour

Regarding the avoidance of misinformation and information gaps during mobility programs, a clearer distribution of roles and responsibilities, and better structured information to stakeholders dealing with EMYs should exist and/or be implemented. For example, at the start of the pandemic, information gaps for EMYs in universities were huge and the stakeholders were not able to respond quickly and accurately enough to the information requests.

On a different topic, but under the same recommendation, host-countries should organize local events and exchange projects were international students will see smaller places and communities. This would serve two aims: conservative local people might be more welcoming and international students might come out of their social bubbles. The following proposition indicates the general aim of this idea.

8. **Initiatives aimed at supporting and maintaining the political and social participation of EMYs should be developed and encouraged.**
Target stakeholders: Civil Society Organizations, Youth Organizations, Local Policymakers, Educational Institutions, Companies/Private Sector, Local Media

We acknowledge past efforts of regulation or providing frameworks for electoral systems and procedures. The EU Citizenship Report 2020 also presents actions and efforts similar to these discussions.

"Increasing citizens' involvement at all stages of the democratic process is key for our European democracy… [The Commission] will continue to fund research and innovation projects that aim to develop deliberative and participatory democracies through experimentation and explore the practices, challenges and impacts of deliberative democracy processes at different geographical scales and in different social groups… In addition, every year, the Commission supports awareness-raising actions on EU citizenship rights and the inclusion of mobile EU citizens through its dedicated funding in the area of EU citizenship." (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 16, 19)

Actions 5 and 6 (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 19) illustrate this commitment at the supranational level. Our second policy recommendation (Chapter 3) strengthens the language use and communicates that funding should be conditional to democratic and social activities, endeavours and implementable ideas, at any of the levels.

2.3 Discussed Propositions: Education

Based on the EMYs contributions during crowdsourcing event, the information deficit is actually much more complex than our surveys reveal. The EMYs are really surprised that close to half of the survey respondents posit that they know about their voting rights, whereas personal experience tells the EMYs that there is an enormous lack of this type of information, especially on this fundamental right of the European treaty (i.e. the possibility to vote in another MS), since it is not easy to find it even if it exists, or it is not presented in user-friendly way. Therefore, the following proposition starts this process from the EU level and permeates it down to the national level. This proposition has also been discussed within the context of communication.

9. **EU political citizenship rights (i.e. voting rights and the right to stand as a candidate) should be better communicated to citizens.**
   <u>Target stakeholders:</u> European Commission, European Parliament, National Policymakers, Educational Institutions.

Even if the general lack of trust in political processes and institutions is not a measurable issue among our respondents, the EMYs clearly indicate the desire to receive relevant, real-life evidence that their political participation can make a difference in EU politics and in the local community.

Additionally, during this on-going pandemic, EMYs agree that the value of the EU is overshadowed by the lack of consensus of the MS that is being communicated by news media. Especially now during these challenging times, the EU should improve and strengthen its communications about its activities and most importantly, its achievements. This, in turn, will also address the issues related to the lack of understanding of the EU, and the diminishing/lack of confidence and trust in the EU. Therefore, the next proposition addresses these issues and extrapolates them partially to both opinion leaders and media in general. This proposition has also been discussed within the context of communication.

10. **Communications about the EU, European citizenship and values (civil rights, liberties), its achievements, should be improved.**
   <u>Target stakeholders:</u> Relevant EU Institutions, their Country Representatives, Members of European Parliament, Opinion Leaders, Media

Additionally, in order to promote multiculturalism and open communication, foreign language skills should be addressed at the national level. A host-country usually invests in providing language courses to new arrivals. However, they should also consider that not all arrivals are there under the same conditions. Students attempting to finish a degree might not have the time to reach a conversational level of the host-country's language, as they might be occupied, or only stay one semester. Thus, host-countries should also consider investing in making important and official information available in the most common foreign language spoken in the EU. These ideas are presented in the following proposition, have been structured in a bottom-up approach, to reach even the EU level.

11. **EU member states should continuously invest in foreign language skills so that a) information is made available in the language most commonly used by EMYs and; b) the learning of the country's language is promoted in order to enable the social integration of EMYs.**
    Target stakeholders: National Policymakers, European Commission, European Parliament

Raising awareness and motivation for civic and political engagement in home countries is the main perquisite for more integration also in host countries. The social and political activeness depends a lot also on the educational system, and school is the key place where these should be nurtured. It can also be here where civic education in relation to the European Union and its opportunities, tasks and essential importance should be included in the curriculum in countries where it is currently missing. Clarifying the concept of EU mobility and multiculturalism, promoting its values can contribute much to the social discourse, to the formation of the public opinion on these topics, and to the mitigation of increasing fears of incoming foreigners.

12. **Awareness and motivation for civic and political engagement should be raised through civic education, starting at an earlier age and with a particular emphasis on secondary education, with topics including (but not limited to) the EU in general, policy-making, voting, multiculturalism, EU political citizenship rights.**
    Target stakeholders: Educational Institutions, Civil Society Organizations, Youth Organizations

Finally, the voting age could also be addressed as an enabler or tool to increase democratic participation. Thus, the question of harmonizing the voting age to 16 years for all member states for EU elections was discussed during our mapping activities and there were mixed views on this topic in our target countries. Not surprisingly, in Austria where the voting age has been lowered, this step was more evaluated and seen as an opportunity to create responsibility and more commitment among young voters at an early stage, whereas in Estonia (even though Estonia had lowered its voting age to 16 years recently in local elections) this measure has been seen as having no remarkable impact on civic activity.

Moreover, the participants of the various activities admit that harmonization of voting age would not be implemented by the EU legislators anytime soon since it was likely to be considered a relatively low priority. To conclude, good schooling and effective civic education are the most important prerequisites – this came out of all the discussions at all mapping activities in both target countries.

All respondents believed that civic education regarding the EU, its institutions and activities and their relevance for EU citizens should be included in the school curriculum. They agreed that teachers should be given the necessary training and resources to make this subject accessible to pupils and students. These views echo a comment that was made by an EMY participant in one of the focus groups: adequate (civic) education is a necessary precondition for lowering the voting age.

The EU Citizenship Report 2020 touches upon this subject (p. 34 – 35), and has planned to work on it through Action 14 (p. 34).

> *"Citizenship education is designed to promote active citizenship and help young people discover their place in today's complex society. Possible activities include volunteering with the European Solidarity Corps, taking part in virtual experiences through the Erasmus+ virtual exchange or going abroad and discovering new cultures through Discover EU. In addition, the Council Recommendation on Promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching invites Member States to step up their efforts to promote common values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Recommendation also calls for more inclusive education systems, better support for educational staff and teaching about Europe and its Member States to help increase a sense of belonging to one's school, local community, country and also the European family. The Commission will continue to work on innovative projects that promote young people's citizenship education and experiences, including through the future Erasmus programme (2021-2027)."* (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 34)

However, with our third recommendation (Chapter 3), we exhort all Member States and their stakeholders to start this education earlier, at the primary and secondary levels of education.

2.4 Discussed Propositions: Network

Project participants have communicated the fact that most EMYs usually tend to stay in a bubble of other expatriates and international people and very few of them try to socialize outside of it. This is a barrier for democratic participation in host countries. The idea of having Super EMYs or community leaders that would reach out to these bubbles was presented. Such individuals would guide EMYs toward reliable sources of information, or kindly remind them of upcoming democratic events and where they could find more information. Super EMYs or community leaders may also benefit from local civil society organisations and networks that would enable them to mobilise the EMYs, bring EMYs to areas of civic activism, volunteering and networking relevant to individual EMYs and in so doing, interact with local youth and integrate in local political and social scenes.

13. **In order to reach EMY communities that are not well integrated into the host countries, designated individuals, e.g. Super EMYs, community leaders, should be empowered to spread information about electoral rights and voting processes.**
    Target stakeholders: National Policymakers and Respective Authorities in Member States

All Member States have a functioning and relatively sustainable civil society and an affluent number of CSOs. These institutions act as watch-dogs of democracy, empower and fight for

citizen engagement in policy making, and discuss and decide on matters that directly affect people's lives. Although many such organisations are already collaborating, they should be encouraged to pay more attention to this particular target group of EMYs, e.g. via EU or national level financial support to such activities.

14. **Associations and organisations concerned with promoting the integration of EMYs around the topic of democratic participation, should be encouraged and funded in their activities and among other things, to cooperate more closely across member state borders.**
    Target stakeholders: Relevant Public Authorities in Member States, Civic Society Organizations [e.g. Chambers of Labour], Youth Organizations, Associations dealing with Education, Opinion Leaders, Media

The EU Citizenship Report 2020 (p. 12) have identified 'mobile' EU citizens as an underrepresented category of voters that face additional challenges. The youth of this category also experience these challenges, and sometimes other that are only applicable to this age group. Nevertheless the Report does not propose punctual action for this and the other underrepresented category of voters. That is why in our fourth policy recommendation (Chapter 3), we call upon the support of studying and working EMY's.

2.5 Discussed Propositions: Technology

Better and more efficient communication channels with the youth should be investigated. Deliverable D3.1. has described the current state of platforms and websites dedicated to democratic participation. Nevertheless, the pre- and post-election surveys have illustrated a lack of knowledge of the existence of these tools by EMY's. Additionally, there is a clear gap at the moment, whereas stakeholders consider social media a powerful channel to reach out to young people, but for the EMYs, the main characteristic of social media is entertainment and not political discussion. EMYs are expecting to be engaged using other tools/channels. Additionally, the language used is also important. Instead of bureaucratic language, the youth expects another type of more marketable/friendlier language to be used. The information should also be better structured and presented in a more user-friendly way. There is a lot of official information available but finding it can be challenging because of the overload of information that EMYs face. Thus, new innovative approaches and tools should be considered and implemented to attract the youth, to inform them, and motivate them to be engaged and contribute. It is highly suggested to use a technological tool that would help EMYs to receive and distribute curated information provided by trustworthy sources. This project presented a pilot of such a tool, EMY Connect, and more information can be found in Deliverable D3.3. EMY Connect might help EMYs to integrate themselves better within local communities in their host countries by enabling them to receive and exchange information, as well as connecting digitally with like-minded peers. Taking this into consideration, the following proposition presents the necessity to adopt technological solutions.

15. **Adoption and advancement of technology to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of official information should be highly considered.**

Target stakeholders: EU and National Level Policymakers, Respective Authorities in Member States

Although we are aware of the both the technological and socio-political barriers and challenges to the implementation of any form of electronic voting (e.g. remote Internet voting), it should be still considered as a possible solution and enabler for politically activating young mobile people. Moreover, creating favourable socio-technological context with needed requirements (secure identification, time stamping, etc.) for the implementation of I-voting, and implementing it, would also address many practical administrative problems related to the pandemic situation and the restriction which also affect elections. This proposition would be spearheaded by Estonia, since it has been implementing I-voting successfully since 2005.

16. **Potential benefits of e-Voting (i.e. i-Voting) solutions, their characteristics, and requirements should be discussed actively with Member States.**
Target stakeholders: Estonian Institutions, Estonian Members of European Parliament, European Parliament, European Commission

Preference for home-country candidates has many logical explanations and could be targeted, only partially, with the improvement of practical information about registration and voting procedures in host-countries. Tools like the EMY Connect could assist in these functions by specifically targeting EMYs. In turn, EMYs can be assured of the validity and correctness of the information provided by the platform, and thus, participate more easily in the political and social processes, such as elections, among others. As such, the following proposition recommends the use of technology to reach out tot this target group.

17. **Increased use of automated technologies by public authorities in order to effectively communicate with and register non-citizen residents should be highly considered**.
Target stakeholders: EU and National Level Policymakers, Respective Authorities in Member States

Digital technologies are transformative tools that have changed how public authorities communicate and interact with citizens (EU Citizenship Report 2020). The Report focuses on technological advancement of all the citizens.

"One of the Commission's key priorities is 'A Europe fit for the digital age' and improving the digital skills of both young people and adults. This is the focus of the updated digital education action plan that runs from 2021 to 2027. Relevant actions include reinforcing efforts to foster digital literacy and promote the development of common guidelines to tackle disinformation through education and training, and supporting the development of a better understanding of artificial intelligence and data among all citizens and systematic integration of digital literacy into formal and informal education projects. The Commission is also committed to addressing the impact of ageing in all policy areas in order to help societies and economies adapt to demographic changes. It will outline specific actions to encourage the active participation of citizens in all stages of life, from

young to old, with a potential additional focus on children's participation in EU political and democratic life." (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 18 - 19)

We further suggest, in our fifth policy recommendation (Chapter 3) that such tools can also be used to assist the EMYs, which have already been categorized as underrepresented voters. The implementation can be done at any level, in the Member States, and even at the supranational level.

2.6 Discussed Propositions: Communication

Last years´ climate protests, mostly lead by young people, have clearly made this target group (i.e. the youth) much more visible for European policy makers. Additionally, the relatively high turnout of young people at the 2019 EP elections seems to be partly a consequence of more active campaigning towards the youth, as pointed out by our participants during our mapping results. Thus, the recommendation would be to just continue with that.

We are aware of the barrier that political parties might not consider EMYs as an election target group because they assume that they will not vote in or for their host country anyway, and do not want to spend such resources without an expected return on investment. Thus, a secondary recommendation would be to attempt to raise awareness and understanding of the political parties, especially those which are currently in the EP or have candidates for it, that the EMYs are ambassadors and spokespersons of the EU and for EU values.

Regarding the topics of the campaigns, our crowdsourcing event uncovered that there is no such thing as extra topics for the youth; a majority of EMYs consider equally important multiple topics, such as migration, climate change, among others. However, there seems to be a considerable gap between their importance attributed by EMYs of different Member States[1] (for instance, how climate change is considered by EMYs in Estonia or Austria). Thus, a secondary recommendation would be to launch cross-EU engagement initiatives for EMYs on important issues for the future of EU. Additionally, such youth activism could be nurtured, guided and focused toward identifying and tackling very concrete topics/challenges which are important to young people and on which the EU can have impact on.

18. **Targeted campaigns should reach out to this segment of voters (EMYs) for both national and EU level elections.**
   Target stakeholders: European Parliament Parties and Candidates, Civic Society Organizations, Youth Organizations

The voting procedure itself has different barriers to any mobile citizen, regardless if they want to undertake it in a home or host-country; thus the registration and voting procedures need re-organization. As for administrative barriers, the recommendation we got from the EMYs that participated in the crowdsourcing event, besides increasing the harmonization of the

---

[1] *In Estonia, the level of values seems to be often lower than in Austria. This needs further investigation to be able to draw concrete recommendations.*

administrative procedures, a very concrete recommendation was submitted. It presented the idea of creating a single database that is easily usable and displaying all the information about the different deadlines and differences in procedures in every single MS which should be well marketed before elections. The EU would be responsible for updating this all the time and the database/platform could be massively marketed before elections. In this sense, the following proposition was introduced.

19. **Voting registration procedures and communication should be improved (by making it more proactive, user-friendly, and further harmonizing them).**
<u>Target stakeholders:</u> Relevant EU Institutions, Relevant State Institutions in Member States

The EU Citizenship Report 2020 focuses mainly on disinformation in relation to the ongoing pandemic.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a massive wave of false or misleading information, including attempts by people and groups from outside the EU to influence EU citizens and debates. By requiring greater accountability for online platforms, the Commission is continuing its work to support an information environment in which citizens can develop well-informed opinions on public affairs. On COVID-19 related disinformation, the Commission has set up a monitoring and reporting programme as a follow up to the June 2020 COVID-19 Joint Communication. Signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation have been reporting monthly on the actions taken to limit the spread of COVID-19 disinformation on their services. In addition, consumer scams, such as offering unnecessary, ineffective and potentially dangerous protective products, have surged as a particular element of disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiatives provided in the Joint Communication and the new Consumer Agenda address these issues. The European Democracy Action Plan and the Digital Services Act are addressing the challenges posed for our societies by online disinformation." (EU Citizenship Report 2020, p. 18)

Nevertheless, this issue was present even before the pandemic. Moreover, in addition to disinformation, the lack or lateness of official information should be address. Therefore, our sixth and final policy recommendation (Chapter 3) recommends improving the communication endeavours with EMYs.

3 Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations have been condensed from the multiple propositions and discussions undertaken between the project partners, participants and stakeholders during the project's activities. For more in-depth explanations and ideas of concrete actions for each recommendation, please refer to sections 2.1 – 2.6.

1. The EU legal framework, including administrative requirements at membership level should be harmonized throughout the EU.

- The administrative requirements include, but are not limited to, registration deadlines and criteria, documentation, processes, thresholds, voting age, age for standing as candidate, pan-European parties, among others.
- Harmonization should include the obligation to disclose election information in an accessible and timely way, and the standardization of information delivery/communication materials
- Harmonization should not be undertaken without consulting EMYs and stakeholders, the former of which can raise awareness of their encountered problems during democratic participation.

2. EU funding for mobility programs should be paired with conditional democratic and social integration endeavours.

- The democratic and social integration endeavours include, but are not limited to, information materials, welcome and farewell package, host country intercultural training, electoral information campaigns, among others.
- Future mobility programs should not only promote mobility, but encourage more host-country engagement. Funding should also be considered for CSOs that work on democratic engagement through pan-European activities.
- Given the COVID-crisis, mobility programs should become more flexible and should be improved to guarantee education and equitable conditions.

3. EU citizenship education, as part of civic education curricula, for both students and teachers, should be promoted throughout the EU.

- The EU citizenship education includes, but is not limited to, the EU in general, policy-making, voting, multiculturalism, EU political citizenship rights, among others.
- Teachers should be given the necessary trainings and resources to make this subject accessible and attractive to the pupils and students.
- Particular attention should be given to first time voters or students nearing the minimum voting age.

4. The EU network of studying and working EMYs should be supported.

- A permanently funded hub should be implemented and should be dedicated to tackling and resolving EMY related topics.
- International cooperation between EMY-focused associations and organizations should be encouraged and built upon.
- Cross-EU engagement initiatives on important issues for the future of EU tackling very concrete topics/challenges important to EMYs should be launched.

5. Appropriate technologies to empower EMYs should be employed throughout the EU, at all levels.

- The technologies include, but are not limited to, digital signatures, electronic voting, i-Voting, EMY Connect or similar tools, among others. The technologies might empower EMYs by being communication mediums, connecting platforms or political participation spaces.
- These technologies present necessary requirements that should be implemented correctly first, in order to safeguard the users.
- New innovative technologies should not be overlooked, but assessed to find potential solutions and enablers for politically activating EMYs.

6. Content and communication management for EMYs should be improved and include information about EU citizenship rights, as well as about the civic values and liberties and achievements of the EU.

- The content dissemination includes, but is not limited to, targeted ads, personalized postings, and targeted election campaigns, among others. The communication management should ensure that the information is relevant, timely and properly packaged (language and content-wise) for EMYs.
- Strategies effectively combating fake news and disinformation campaigns should be implemented.
- Individuals should be empowered to spread reliable information and to democratically participate.

References

EMY (2019). "Deliverable D2.2. Results of pre-election mapping and interaction activities in Austria and Estonia."

EMY (2019). "Deliverable D4.3. Mapping surveys and focus groups in Estonia before EP elections."

EMY (2020). "Deliverable D2.1. Guiding documentation for implementing mapping and interaction activities."

EMY (2020). "Deliverable D2.3. Results of post-election mapping and interaction activities in Austria and Estonia."

EMY (2020). "Deliverable D2.4. Analysis of user requirements for designing an online tool for improving engagement of mobile students across the EU."

EMY (2020). "Deliverables D3.1. Current state of the art and gap analysis."

European Union (2017). "EU Citizenship Report 2017: Strengthening Citizens' Rights in a Union of Democratic Change." Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

European Union (2020). "EU Citizenship Report 2020: Empowering citizens and protecting their rights."

OECD (2015). "Government at a Glance 2015." OECD Publishing, Paris

Annexes

Annex 1: Summary of the Deliverable

Policy Recommendations	Included Discussed Proposition	Working Assumptions Addressed	Stakeholders
1. The EU legal framework, including administrative requirements at membership level should be harmonized throughout the EU.	1. Further attempts to harmonize electoral systems (for EP elections) throughout the EU should be made.	Primarily: 5a – 5c Secondarily: 1a, 3c	EUI, RAMS
	2. Participation of transnational parties should be encouraged and corresponding legal restrictions removed.	Primarily: 2d, 5a Secondarily: 1a, 2a – 2e, 4d	EUI, RAMS
	3. Awareness should be raised among officials and representatives of public authorities of the problems encountered by EU citizens with regard to democratic participation when they go to live in another member state, temporarily or permanently.	Primarily: 4a – 4d Secondarily: 5a – 5c	NP, EC, EP
	4. Electoral rights of mobile EU citizens should be extended to all levels of government (EU, national, regional).	Primarily: 3d, 5a Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 2d, 2e	NP
	5. EU member states should assist EMYs to better understand the administrative mechanisms (e.g. residence, voter registration) necessary to participate in elections and other forms of democratic engagement.	Primarily: 5a, 5b Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 2d, 4b,	NP, EC, EP

Acronyms:
CSO = Civil Society Organizations
EC = European Commission
EI = Educational Institutions
EP = European Parliament

EUI = EU Institutions
LP = Local Policymakers
M = Media
NP = National Policymakers

PS = Private Sector
RAMS = Respective Authorities in Member States
YO = Youth Organizations

Policy Recommendations	Included Discussed Proposition	Working Assumptions Addressed	Stakeholders
2. EU funding for mobility programs should be paired with conditional democratic and social integration endeavours	6. Existing or new innovative mobility programs should receive more funds, not only to promote mobility per se but also to encourage host-country engagement.	Primarily: 2a – 2e Secondarily: 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b	EUI
	7. Information about democratic participation in the host country should be provided in a more proactive manner, e.g. a 'welcome package' distributed to all new EMYs arriving in their host country.	Primarily: 3a – 3d Secondarily: 2d, 2e, 4a – 4d	NP, CSO, YO, E+I, RAMS, EI,
	8. Initiatives aimed at supporting and maintaining the political and social participation of EMYs should be developed and encouraged.	Primarily: 4b, 4d Secondarily: 2d, 2e, 3d	CSO, YO, LP, EI, M, PS
3. EU citizenship education, as part of civic education curricula, for both students and teachers, should be promoted throughout the UE. 6. Content and communication management for EMYs should be improved and include information about EU citizenship rights, as well as about the civil values and liberties and achievements of the EU.	9. EU political citizenship rights (i.e. voting rights and the right to stand as a candidate) should be better communicated to citizens	Primarily: 3a, 3b Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 2a – 2e	EC, EP, NP, EI
	10. Communications about the EU, European citizenship and values (civil rights, liberties), its achievements, should be improved.	Primarily: 2a – 2e Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 3a, 3b	EUI, MEP, OL, M
3. EU citizenship education, as part of civic education curricula, for both students and teachers, should be promoted throughout the UE.	11. EU member states should continuously invest in foreign language skills so that a) information is made available in the language most commonly used by EMYs and; b) the learning of the country's language is promoted in order to enable the social integration of EMYs.	Primarily: 4a Secondarily: 4b – 4d, 5a – 5c	NP, EC, EP
	12. Awareness and motivation for civic and political engagement should be raised through civic education, starting at an earlier age and with a particular emphasis on secondary education, with topics including (but not limited to) the EU in general, policy-making, voting, multiculturalism, EU political citizenship rights.	Primarily: 2a – 2e Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 3a, 3b, 4b	EI, CSO, YO

Acronyms:
CSO = Civil Society Organizations
E+I = Erasmus+ Institutions
EC = European Commission
EI = Educational Institutions

EP = European Parliament
EUI = EU Institutions
M = Media
MEP = Members of European Parliament
NP = National Policymakers

OL = Opinion Leaders
RAMS = Respective Authorities in Member States
YO = Youth Organizations

Policy Recommendations	Included Discussed Proposition	Working Assumptions Addressed	Stakeholders
4. The EU network of studying and working EMYs should be supported.	13. In order to reach EMY communities that are not well integrated into the host countries, designated individuals, e.g. Super EMYs, community leaders, should be empowered to spread information about electoral rights and voting processes.	Primarily: 1a, 2a Secondarily: 2d, 2e, 4d	RAMS, CSO, YO, EA, OL, M,
	14. Associations and organizations concerned with promoting the integration of EMYs around the topic of democratic participation, should be encouraged in their activities and among other things, to cooperate more closely across member state borders.	Primarily: 4a – 4d Secondarily: 1a, 2a, 3a, 3b	NP, RAMS
5. Appropriate technologies to empower EMYs should be employed throughout the EU, at all levels.	15. Adoption and advancement of technology to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of official information should be highly considered.	Primarily: 3a – 3d Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 2a, 2d	MEP, NP, RAMS
	16. Potential benefits of e-Voting (i.e. i-Voting) solutions, their characteristics, and requirements should be discussed actively with Member States.	Primarily: 5c Secondarily: 1a, 4d	Estonian MEP and Institutions, EP, EC
	17. Increased use of automated technologies by public authorities in order to effectively communicate with and register non-citizen residents should be highly considered.	Primarily: 5a, 5b Secondarily: 3c, 4c, 5c	NP, RAMS
6. Content and communication management for EMYs should be improved and include information about EU citizenship rights, as well as about the civil values and liberties and achievements of the EU.	18. Targeted campaigns should reach out to this segment of voters (EMYs) for both national and EU level elections.	Primarily: 4d Secondarily: 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3a, 3b, 3d, 4a	EP P&C, CSO, YO
	19. Voting registration procedures and communication should be improved (by making it more proactive, user-friendly, and further harmonizing them).	Primarily: 3c, 5a, 5b Secondarily: 1b, 2d, 3b, 4b	EUI, RAMS

Acronyms:
CSO = Civil Society Organizations
EA = Education Associations
EC = European Commission
EP = European Parliament
EP P&C = European Parliament Parties and Candidates
EUI = EU Institutions

M = Media
MEP = Members of European Parliament
NP = National Policymakers
OL = Opinion Leaders
RAMS = Respective Authorities in Member States
YO = Youth Organizations