

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION



ESEC OPINION - MARCH 2022

The distance between young people, institutions and elected representatives has widened, as evidenced by the record abstention rate among 18-24 year-olds in the June 2021 regional and departmental elections. Yet the younger generation is neither less engaged nor less interested in politics than their elders. **This engagement is demonstrated less through the ballot box and increasingly through other channels: online petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, dissemination of content online, etc.**

87% ABSTENTION RATE FOR 18-24 YEAR-OLDS in the regional and departmental elections of 2021.

50% OF THOSE WRONGLY REGISTERED ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL

are under 30 years of age (people registered in a place that is not their place of residence).

The ESEC is sounding the alarm: if nothing is done, the low levels of participation of today's young people is likely to continue beyond their youth, which raises questions about our system.

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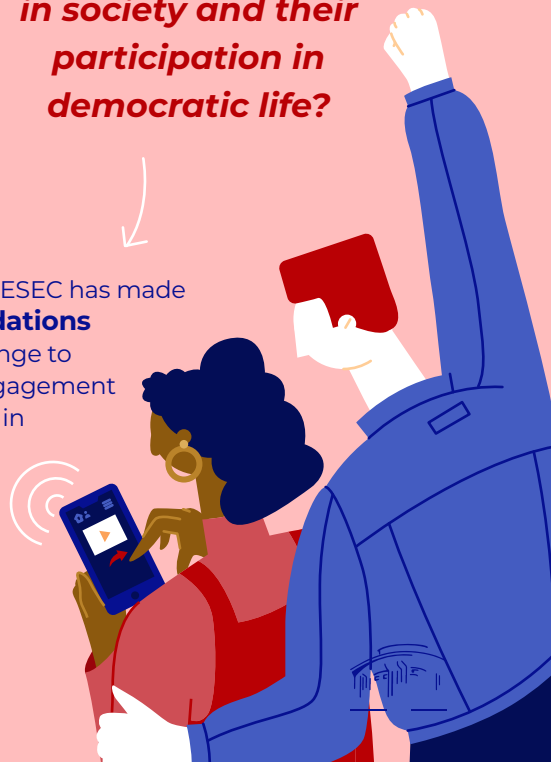
Kenza Occansey, former Secretary General of the FAGE, is Vice-President of the ESEC, where he sits on the group of student organisations and youth movements.



The ESEC has made **21 recommendations** for systemic change to promote the engagement of young people in society and their participation in elections and democratic life.

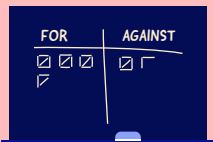


How can we encourage young people's involvement in society and their participation in democratic life?



THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE:

1 MORE EMPHASIS ON LEARNING ABOUT DEMOCRACY FROM AN EARLY AGE



- Give those from **16 years of age the right to vote**, together with training on voting from an early age.
- Transform the *Journée Défense Citoyenneté*

[Defence and Citizenship Day] into a **citizenship week** presenting the election issues and ways of getting involved.

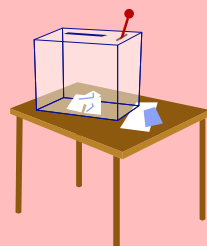
- Introduce **compulsory visits to republican institutions** as part of training courses.

2 PUT YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE OF PUBLIC POLICIES THAT AFFECT THEM

- Make **mechanisms such as “structured dialogue”** universal allowing citizens, especially young people, to get involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies.
- Give young people from the age of 18 the same rights and access as other citizens to support schemes such as the **social minima** (benefits to ensure a minimum income).

3 FACILITATE REGISTRATION ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL AND ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO GO TO THE BALLOT BOX

- Count **blank votes** as part of the votes cast and make it compulsory to have blank ballot papers at polling stations.
- Prevent **incorrect registration or no registration** by using, for example, the services of “France Connect” to make it easier to notify a change of address.
- Facilitate the process of informing citizens before elections, with the public authorities **centralising and disseminating the programmes** of each candidate and the issues of various elections.
- Introduce a **degree of proportional representation** in legislative elections, without undermining the predominant nature of election by majority and ensure that this mechanism allows for better representation of the richness and diversity of French society.



4 REVITALISE THE PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY, HOLD ELECTED OFFICIALS TO ACCOUNT AND REJUVENATE POLITICAL BODIES TO REBUILD TRUST



- Create a day in Parliament dedicated to **reviewing petitions** that have been processed by the ESEC.
- Lower the threshold of signatories required to trigger **shared initiative referendums** to 1/10th of the members of parliament and 1/50th of the electorate.
- Introduce a **real statute for elected representatives**, which would set out guarantees, rights and obligations (e.g. commitment to mandates, representativeness of society, etc.).
- **Limit the number of terms of office to three consecutive terms** within a local executive or as a parliamentarian, with the exception of terms of office in municipalities of less than 3,500 inhabitants.

