Campaigning for Europe

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(7) Ideas Lab: How to engage young people in electoral process?
8 November, Ledra Street

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Facilitators: Ian Andersen and Susanne Nebert, Art of Hosting Team, European Commission

This Ideas Lab aimed to gather ideas for **how to motivate young people to engage both with EU institutions and in political life** in general, especially in view of the upcoming European Parliament elections. How can institutional and civil society resources be pooled and used to create synergies and allow for wider outreach? How can we understand the practical needs in this area and bring together different insights on the need to eliminate apathy?

Opening of the Ideas Lab with some facts:
- 25% of young people vote
- 25% of young people are involved in volunteering activities
- 5% of European MEPs are under 40
- 17% of the EU population is young
- Young people spend an average of 5 hours on social media every day

Warming-up questions before putting participants into groups for table discussions:
- Do we offer young people ways of participating that appeal to them?
- What is the future of the EU if young people do not vote?
- Do we use the right method to communicate to young people? When we talk to young people, do we talk to the right ones?
- How do we listen to the EU's young people? How do we answer complaints and demands?

Warm-up introduction of the participants: Why did you come here? What are you passionate about?
- With the coming European election it is necessary to figure out what kind of EU we want and we therefore need to consider the role of youth in the future of the EU project.

6 ideas corresponding to 6 tables/groups worked for 45 minutes, then presented a 1 minute (more or less) idea as the result and take-away recommendation.

Table 1: Forget party policies and be more concrete in campaigns
> Mandatory voting? Lowering the voting age? Simplification of electoral life: organising all elections on the same day (national, local and European).

Table 2: How to turn online complaining into real political participation?
> The campaign should target fake accounts, identify the main topics of interest online, break the social media circle of information, **be more inclusive**, involve NGOs in the trust-building process.

Table 3: Voter = Activist: young people need to feel useful when they vote.
> Young people need to imagine the future of Europe, to feel the **need for change**. Young people could come together in a platform, where they could talk to experts who would give them advice and **empower** them to spread messages and develop initiatives.

Table 4: How to use humour and pop culture references on social media communication for EU campaigns?
> The example of Donald Tusk's Instagram account and the way he uses humour. Campaigns should use trends and **try to make the EU go viral**.

Table 5: How to engage in "exclusively online spaces" dedicated to the campaign?
> Taking the example of gaming communities and the model of the Erasmus+ programme, to design a project where young people could understand how the EU institutions actually work and how they can change and shape their life through the institutional and electoral process. **Use the tools young people are using and create an environment where we can reach them and involve them.**

Table 6: How to engage less educated young people too?
> Connect with local organisations, sports associations; reintroduce politics in the discussion of people who are less informed and involved in the electoral process. **How to make the EU "sexy" for all young people?**
+ If you want to be involved in the networking process you can contact youth@ep.europa.eu.
- 3 key words to take away from the Ideas Lab on how to engage young people; **goal, community & need.**

1/ Need to give young people a **goal**, something to fight for, a vision, a principle they believe in.
2/ Need to help young people to create a **community.**
3/ Young people **Need** to feel they have a role to play.

Take away of the Ideas Lab: **To engage young people in elections, give them a goal that they can be passionate about and enable them to be part of a community of peers.**