

A Guide with Scenarios for Involving Young People  
in Rethinking Democracy on a Digital Level



# MOVING DEMOCRACY ONLINE

THE HAGUE, 30 OCTOBER - 3 NOVEMBER 2022



A project organised under the framework of Council of Europe  
youth campaign to revitalise democracy:

**DEMOCRACY**  
HERE NOW



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## About Moving Democracy Online

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“Moving Democracy Online” has become an umbrella initiative launched by Foundation Netherlands – Romania in The Hague, in 2022. Under this generic title, we have been organising a series of projects aiming at providing a platform for young people to improve the dialogue with policy makers, within a growing process of stepping to e-democracy. The programme stimulated participants to get in dialogue with representatives of The Hague politics, policy makers and other stakeholders.



Promoting the active participation of young people in democratic life and fostering debate around the major issues affecting youth, equipping youngsters with various tools useful for the e-democracy process, allowing them to develop new skills, competencies and knowledge to make their voice heard by exercising together creative tasks during the daily activities were some of the objectives we aimed at. The initiative encouraged discussions between youngsters, decision makers and other experts on democracy and e-democracy issues, on how to stimulate young people’s involvement in the development of democratic societies.

In order to be motivated to actively take part in shaping the decision-making process, youngsters need to see that their opinions are taken into account.

Young people should be able to get in dialogue with policy makers also in times of crisis. They should be stimulated to have a direct say in the process of stepping to e-democracy.

Dealing with the corona crisis has been one additional challenge to those the EU was already facing. “Moving Democracy Online” has been one direct consequence of these crises, being executed as a combination of online and physical meetings.

By taking stock of the dynamics of the democratic processes, youngsters collected new approaches and learnt how to make their voices heard. As a result of their interaction, participants came up with scenarios on how to better connect young people with the democratic process by improving online dialogue between them and policy makers, within a growing process of moving democracy online connect young people with the democratic process by improving online dialogue between them and policy makers, within a growing process of moving democracy online.

The concrete proposals to help improve the e-democracy tools enabling youngsters to voice their opinions are gathered in this “Moving Democracy Online” Guide.

By putting together various learning outcomes, we aimed at creating a concrete model showing how youngsters can have a say in the decisions that affect their life

Youth participation to dialogue in digital age allows those responsible for youth policies at local and European levels to listen to the voice of young people, finding out their needs to participate to the democratic life and taking them into account.

# Introduction

## DEMOCRACY HERE NOW



Democracy Here, democracy Now is a Council of Europe youth campaign for revitalising democracy and for strengthening mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. The Campaign focusses on access to human rights, meaningful youth participation and impact of the digitalisation as factors of democratisation.

One main conclusion regularly coming forward from various debates our Foundation has organised with young people is that every citizen has the moral duty to contribute to finding solutions to the local problems. The young generation needs to be involved in the public debate. Not only by talking, but also by actively engaging in the decisions connected to the democratic process. Stepping to e-democracy is an important part of this process.

Young people are now more connected online than ever before. Consequently, getting them more involved in the digital democratic process has a big potential.

Focusing on all these aspects, the project is directly linking to "Democracy here, Democracy now" campaign. It also underlines its Democracy and Digitalisation dimension, by debating the opportunities, challenges and risks the digital technologies offer to young people - notably regarding democracy and democratic participation.

By providing space for youngsters to places in the local community where they can learn about participating to the decision-making processes affecting them, the project stimulated their democratic participation by allowing them to work on concrete scenarios for the Guide.



### A youth campaign

- to revitalise democracy
- to restore the mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes
- 2022
- youth initiated
- democratic in practice: empowering young people to set the public agenda



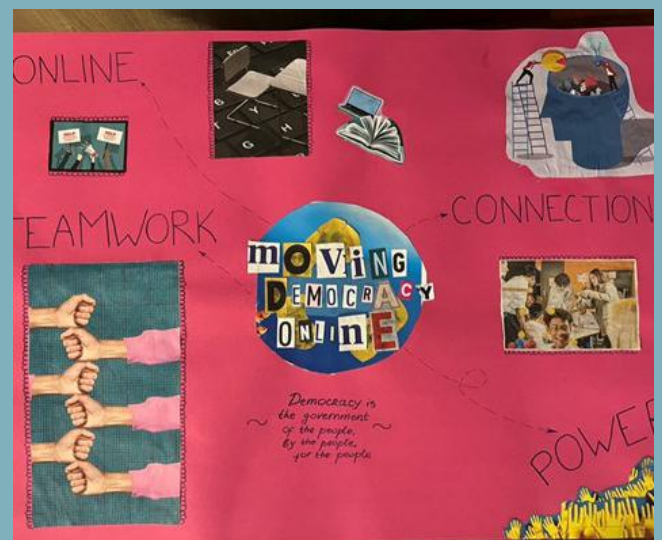
Participants learnt about democracy through active engagement. Through non-formal learning activities and discussions, the project enabled young people to acquire competences contributing to their personal development and foster their active participation in society.

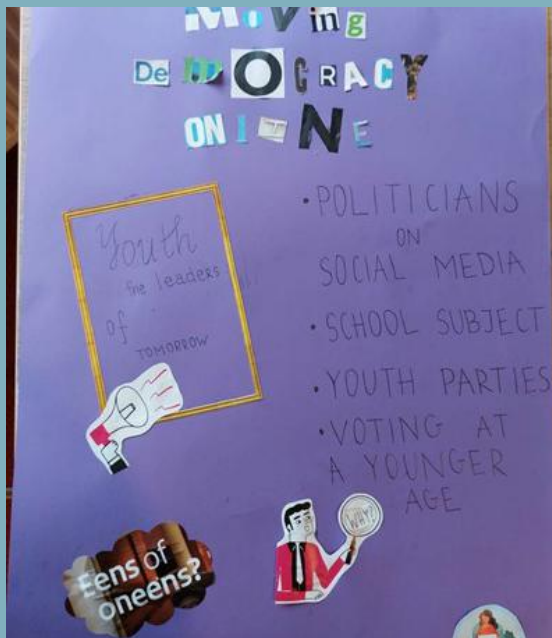
Engaging in dialogue with each other and with various policy makers, young people learnt new things about the democratic processes and formed a critical opinion. Taking a step further, they got actively involved in designing concrete solutions for moving democracy online. Their conclusions were presented and discussed during various meetings in The Hague.

Youngsters developed skills on how to interact with experts and authorities and how to work in different teams. By creating the scenarios for the Guide, they learnt how to better structure the information they collected.

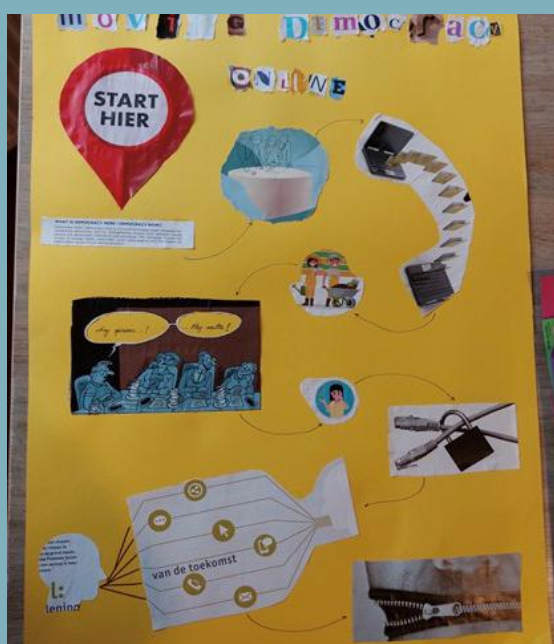
Participants were challenged to represent some of the scenarios they developed in a creative manner. By producing colourful posters and presenting their ideas in front of everybody, young people developed their creativity and communication skills, next to their e-democracy knowledge.

They exercised their involvement in the democratic process as active citizens, by sharing opinions and discussing results – first with each other and then with top policy makers at local level in The Hague (during meetings in person at the Romanian Embassy, the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs, The Municipality of The Hague, the United Nations Criminal Tribunal, as well as online, with a Dutch member of Parliament). This way, youngsters could share recommendations put together during the project activities.



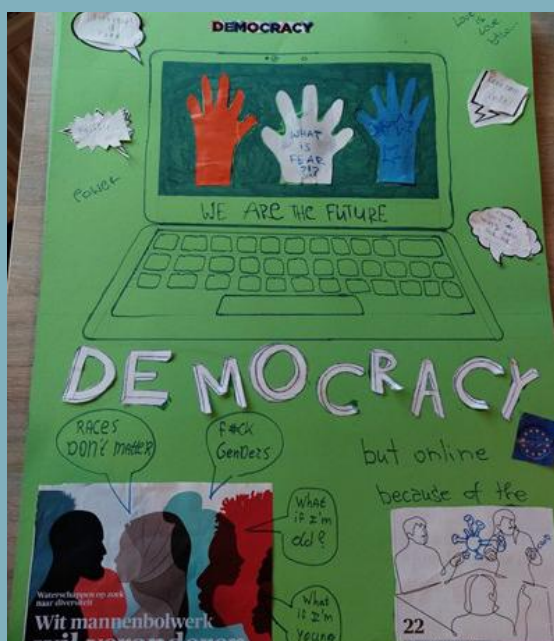


The main activity of the project took place in The Hague between 30 October and 3 November 2022. The initiative was implemented by Foundation Netherlands-Romania.



By attending the project, participants became more aware of the importance of digitalisation, of the advantages and disadvantages of the e-democracy, of the decision-making process at local, national and European levels and of the tools available for making their voice heard.

They will know where to look for the right information, how to use the tools that are there for them or how to better engage in dialogue with the decision makers. They learnt how to cooperate in the digital age, erasing borders and getting closer to each other in order to shape together their common future.



As a long-term benefit, we expect participants to further act as multipliers of the programme values in their direct environment: home, school, clubs, friends, local organisations or local authorities. Bringing the experiences of the project back to the local communities is expected to stimulate further dialogue and to create more understanding of the democratic processes and of the opportunities that can be created for moving them one step further, to the digital environment.

# Ten Main Scenarios Suggested by Participants

## 1. CREATING HYBRID YOUTH PARLIAMENTS, MOCK PARLIAMENTS ONLINE

- Create hybrid parliaments (for instance a European Youth Parliament, a Mock Parliament), meeting both online and in person, where to discuss about problems concerning young people directly and have the opportunity to solve them;
- Young people can join a national parliament, then they can be nationally elected for the European level and form a European Youth Parliament (EYP);
- One of the main duties of the EYP will be representing youth nationally and internationally, involving them in decision-making by actively asking for their opinions and letting them vote and make the difference;
- Every young person would have the opportunity to be heard because everyone could send ideas to the EYP. They will check every idea they get, will choose the best ones and then invite the representatives of the idea to the EYP as guests, where they can make their dreams a reality;
- Activities of the Parliament: conferences, both online and in person, so that the parliament can gather the ideas. Also, we would really like this EYP to organise events such as this, in order to involve more young people in the decision-making process;
- Some practical details: the EYP will meet every single week, online, and twice a year in person in a different country;
- Complementary, create a Mock Parliament Online for one week or so, where young people would have the opportunity to feel like real politicians, to feel the responsibility of the decisions they make. Then they will be more involved in the real decision making. This way, they can contribute to making their country and the whole world better. We feel that many young people do not have any idea what happens in the politics and how responsible you have to be to take care of so many people. A Mock Parliament meeting regularly online, in sessions of one





## 2. POLITICIANS SHOULD BE MORE ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Politicians should be more active on social media, if they want to reach young people. Social media is a great way to reach youngsters in the society;
- Every young person is active on social media, way more active than young people are for example following the news;
- More options to chat online with politicians (debates, webinars, meetings, chats). This way, politicians can easily communicate with young people, understand their ideas and problems and keep in touch with reality;
- When there is a decision taken by the local municipality, they should also ask young peoples' opinions, and that can happen online (through surveys for instance);
- Online (zoom) meetings with politicians, giving youngsters the opportunity to share their visions. We believe that young people have a fresh view when it comes to politics;
- Decision-makers should make better use of Internet to stimulate people who like to speak up their minds and to listen to every voice;
- Organise online meetings with young people from all over Europe and the world, encourage students to make projects and get involved in moving democracy online;
- Politicians should make use of decision-making processes that are digitalised and supported by technology, giving young people a leading role in these processes



### 3. USE ONLINE METHODS TO MAKE POLITICIANS MORE LIKABLE, RELATABLE AND HENCE RELIABLE

- More attention to be given to the younger people, because when parties and politicians are advertising, they are mostly focused on middle-aged people, while they need to get young people to participate at their events as well (youngsters will be able to vote also);
- Make online surveys among young people, to see if they like the local and national people that are leading them;
- Hire specialists to make the political messages less boring, so that young people can also understand them;
- Try to change the stigma: “Politics is nerdy and boring”, make it more fun so it attracts more young people (fun ads, give young people concrete roles etc.).



### 4. POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD HAVE YOUTH PARTIES

- Many young people do not know anything about politics, and we think politicians should be more active in informing young people and involving them in politics in an organised manner. This way, we can voice our opinions more directly;
- Young people should have access to the decisions made by political parties – there could be meetings online, organized by main political parties, to explain their visions to the youth, to tell them what they want to do and to ask them to vote on what the parties propose for making life better for the people;
- When we are able to express our opinions in an organised setting, we can have more influence and be better listened to.

## 5. YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD VOTE ONLINE AND AT A YOUNGER AGE

- Our advice is to allow young people to vote at a younger age. Now you can vote when you are 18, but we want to change that to a younger age, so young people can have more influence. Normally you would not say that we can gain more influence, because the other people are not so busy with politics. But when there is a school subject involving politics, students really get to know a lot about politics, and then they can vote knowing what it is all about;
- Some say that we do not have enough experience and knowledge, but everybody has to start somewhere. Even when you are 18 and you have to vote, you also do not have a lot of experience in voting. Experience comes along the way;
- There should be optional school classes and programmes offered by all schools, that are paying attention to the elections and to informing young people on the importance the vote has for democracy – so that we can get an idea on how elections work. We think that the main problem with youth and politics is that we simply do not know much about it;
- That can be changed if schools work with political parties and make politics attractive for us, giving us the chance to tell our opinions, but also taking them into account;
- One of the best ways to take our opinions seriously, would be to give us the chance to vote at an earlier age;
- When it comes to moving democracy online, voting online would be a good thing. It is easier, faster, accessible from everywhere, and in a way more logical, nowadays.





6. ONLINE CONNECTIONS, TEAM-WORK AND POWER: ATTRACTING THE YOUTH IN DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

- Moving Democracy Online = teamwork, connections, power;
- Online: technology is everywhere, without having to travel. It saves a lot of time and energy;
- Why are connections so important? It makes us stronger and united, because Democracy cannot be a one man's job;
- Power: when we have people that are united and work together, the power comes from good connections and teamwork;
- Democracy is not only politics, but it is also in our everyday lives, from our friendships to just work in general, being able to connect to people and communicate in different manners.



## 7. TRUST MOVING DEMOCRACY ONLINE AND ENGAGE THE YOUTH BY SPREADING THE POLITICAL MESSAGE TO NEW MEDIA CHANNELS

- Spreading awareness in the neighbourhood and sharing knowledge is the most important thing. That can be easily done online these days – for instance via WhatsApp groups;
- By moving democracy to the Internet, we can make some things easier and more accessible to everyone;
- By moving democracy online, we will protect governments' as well as people's rights from crisis such as the one generated by the Corona virus. We respect people's health, that is why we are moving the democracy, the progress and the achievements online;
- We should not be afraid of manipulating via the Internet. Technology is constantly improving to overcome such things;
- We use technology every day, so moving democracy online is very important. Because what is Democracy, in the end? Democracy means being equal in front of the world, having the right to vote, to connect with each other, to express our opinions.



# What to do further with the Guide?

## Suggestions for disseminating and exploiting the project results

### Motivate others to take action through launching awareness campaigns

- 1) Spread the Guide among local politicians
- 2) Share the Guide on social media
- 3) Put on posters and flyers on buildings and in schools

- 1) Send the results to the people we have spoken to, so they know how we think about the topics we discussed
- 2) There should be more promotion of democracy and digitalization in schools
- 3) Organize more projects like this and keep the activities where we meet people like the Romanian Ambassador that spoke to us, the politician and all the other experts

- 1) Organise youth meetings and online debates where we can introduce our ideas
- 2) Arrange meetings with political parties, where responsible politicians can take a look at the Guide, promoting it at a higher level. They could also give us useful feedback
- 3) Share it with different youth organisations and schools

We think that further promotion could even happen as a result of us just sharing our positive experiences to each other through means such as social media or even like general conversations – so word of mouth, and we already discussed what to do with the Guide





## How to Further Support Moving Democracy Online?

E-voting: making e-voting accessible to everyone, creating an app where people can vote online.

E-petitions: make them available to everyone and use them for e-democracy.

E-consultations: zoom meetings with politicians.

E-democracy: more opportunities for young and modern people. It is easy and accessible; we should use it more.

Another tool might be popular personalities – celebrities, influencers – engaged to spread the message, because our generation is inclined to listen to them. They could get more people involved if they speak positively about these projects and create an optimistic perception of a project like this.

As a follow-up activity, organise projects similar to this, but on a smaller scale, for instance focusing on digital democracy.

Make online games and movies to improve people's knowledge about politics and increase their interest

More online meetings – means less pollution.

Make online surveys on how people feel about small local issues and about local decision-makers and confront them with the results.

More referendums and direct democracy where young people are involved - through online surveys.

Tell the story and talk to each other. Communicate.

Use social media to reach a bigger platform. Organise public debates.

Get more people to give other 10 advices.

Continue organising projects like this and bring young people in contact with the decision-makers like the ones we discussed with.

Awareness campaign to be implemented at the end of the programme.

Support democratic processes in which citizens get to participate, so that they can collectively decide what's best for the people.

Slogans to inspire the awareness campaign:

*TRUST Moving Democracy Online!*

DEMOCRACY, BUT....

ONLINE!

**Democracy cannot be a one man's job.**

**Make your voice heard!**

Youth – the leaders of tomorrow!



**Use your voice and make a change!**

Youth – the leaders of tomorrow!

**MOVING DEMOCRACY ONLINE**

=

**Teamwork, Connections, Power**

**DEBUNK  
FAKE NEWS ON  
SOCIAL MEDIA!**

# Democratic Processes, E-Democracy, Digital Decision-Making Through the Eyes of the Youngsters

Democratic process:

- a process in which everyone is allowed to have an influence
- people are involved in making political decisions
- a process in which citizens get to participate so that they can collectively decide what is best for the people
- involving the people in decision-making





### E-democracy:

- a democracy which is online
- the use of technological tools to help carry out democratic processes in an easier manner
- European youth parliament, online lessons and meetings involve young people in decision-making



Digital decision-making process:

- being able to do important decisions by using technology
- more convenient and attainable for younger generations
- decision making processes that are digitalized and supported by technology
- actions and decisions are made by everyone and they are a good representation of society, and the
- Internet will help to make them faster.



## Ten Different Words That Best Describe Your Experience of the Project:

1. Interesting
2. Fascinating
3. Curious
4. Motivating
5. Amazing
6. Brilliant
7. Exciting
8. Charming
9. Creative
10. Energetic



1. Fun
2. Interesting
3. Social
4. Cultural
5. Educational
6. Exhausting
7. Memorable
8. Dancing
9. Teamwork
10. Emotion

1. Broadening
2. Bonding
3. Development
4. Diversity
5. Unique
6. Valuable
7. Educative
8. Inspiring
9. Productive
10. Helpful

1. Busy
2. Creative
3. Community
4. Connection
5. Friendships
6. Tiring
7. Variety
8. Windy
9. Impressive
10. Refreshing



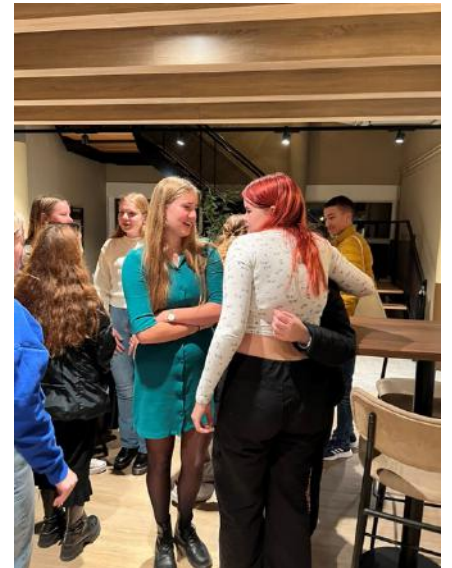
## Feedback and advice from Thom van Campen (Member of the House of Representatives)



Dear participants to the project: “Moving Democracy Online”, my few advices for you are:

- find a subject that really interests you, something you want to know more about it, political subject, something that is a hot topic in your city or in your region.
- try to use the online ways, the online roads, to get in contact, to find a decision-maker, a politician in your city, in your province or on a national level to ask some questions about your subject and to debate with him or her about it.
- become politically active yourself. Become a member of a political party you feel affiliated, you feel common with. That’s the way we can use online ways to become politically active and to raise and use our voice.

# Some more impressions of the project.



# MOVING DEMOCRACY ONLINE

Project organised by:

Foundation Netherlands-Romania  
The Hague



In the framework of:

"Democracy Here, Democracy Now"

A Council of Europe

**DEMOCRACY**  
**HERE NOW**

