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4 **Young Ideas to Empower Political Participation in the 21st**
5 **century**

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8 Resolution submitted by: *Political Commission 2*

9 **Resolution adopted by consensus of the Federal Committee of JEF Europe**

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12 JEF Europe,

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- 15 • Emphasising that the European Union has a grave commitment to promote
16 peace, democracy and human rights in its very foundation and that this
17 commitment must be pursued as its highest priority;
 - 18 • Recognising the historical and future importance of representative democracy
19 which gives citizens the opportunity to communicate their preferences and
20 concerns to politicians and government officials, and to put pressure on their
21 representatives to be held accountable and to respond to their needs;
 - 22 • Pointing out that political participation in our European democracies must go
23 well beyond mere electoral processes, thus including, but not limited to, the
24 right to freedom of thought and expression, assembly and association;
 - 25 • Being increasingly conscious that the current institutions of representative
26 democracy look out-dated in the light of advancements in communication
27 technologies that bring opportunities for more enhanced citizen participation;
 - 28 • Noting with concern that there are large inequalities regarding the
29 demographics of participatory processes since certain ethnic groups, age
30 bands and also women are generally less well represented;
 - 31 • Emphasising that it is important for everyone to be heard and represented
32 accordingly by policy-makers when engaging in participatory processes
33 instead of paying mere lip-service;



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- Recalling the important preconditions that enable people to take part in participatory processes such as one's socio-economic and educational background;
 - Worrying about the effects of the on-going economic crisis in Europe, which also lead to decreasing trust in national as well as European institutions and disillusionment towards formal politics in general as reflected in the historically low turnout rates in the European Parliament elections;
 - Contemplating that citizens will most likely only regain their trust in public institutions if decision-makers on the domestic and EU level can restore their faith in the existence of solidarity, democracy and rule of law in the EU;
 - Welcoming the European Commission's current initiative to review the technical procedure for the so-far rather unsuccessful European Citizen's Initiative (ECI);
 - Acknowledging the European Commission's dedication to the fourth Cycle of the EU Structured Dialogue to analyse youth empowerment;
 - Recalling our JEF Europe resolution on lowering the active right to vote to the age of 16;
 - Appreciating the amount of input received during several rounds of JEF internal Structured Dialogue on this matter.

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55 Therefore, JEF Europe

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57 Laying the grounds for political participation

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1. Recalls that in order to increase trust and understanding between citizens and decision-makers, basic conditions, especially legitimacy, transparency, accountability, benevolence and competence need to be guaranteed;
 2. Reminds of the importance of empowering all citizens in the political participation process, especially those groups who are found to participate less due to reasons of ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, age and gender;

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66 Improving and developing EU tools to strengthen political participation

- 67 3. Calls upon the European Parliament to lead the drive to fully implement article
68 11 TEU in order to invigorate participatory democracy in the EU;
- 69 4. Urges the European Commission to revise the technical procedure for the ECI,
70 particularly calling for the removal of bureaucratic hurdles, aiding associations
71 handing in an ECI with information on legal issues, and specifically promoting
72 the ECI among European citizens;
- 73 5. Expects the European Commission to strongly enhance regular and structured
74 dialogue with organised civil society such as the current initiative to revive the
75 Social Dialogue;
- 76 6. Reiterates the 2013 Civil Society Alliance for the European Year of Citizens
77 recommendation, which states that promoting an informed, active and
78 organised European citizenry as well as open and responsive institutions
79 should be core elements of the Parliament's agenda and way of functioning;
- 80 7. Reminds relevant decision-makers in Member States as well as in EU
81 institutions of continuing to enforce a youth work strategy around Europe as a
82 practice to empower youth;
- 83 8. Prompts the European Commission to steer a process of mutual policy-
84 learning among Member States as regards the exchange of information on
85 political participation;

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87 Enhancing electoral politics and decision-making processes

- 88 9. Calls to reopen the discussion on transnational lists for the upcoming
89 European Parliament elections, grounded in the firm belief that the
90 development of European political life will stimulate political participation;
- 91 10. Recommends the institutionalisation of open primaries within the European
92 political parties for the election of their lead candidates who compete for the
93 post of European Commission President in European elections;
- 94 11. Strongly invites policy-makers to consider the introduction of a youth quota on
95 electoral lists as well as in non-electoral, internal political processes ;
- 96 12. Invites Members of the European Parliament as well as national parliaments to
97 experiment with a process to include further tools on direct democracy such as



98 online debates and voting in order to involve citizens more directly in decision-
99 making processes and also to strengthen politicians' representative mandate;

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101 Educating and informing citizens about political participation

102 13. Must ensure that formal as well as non-formal education are key pillars in
103 building a culture of political participation for all citizens, regardless of their
104 socio-economic background;

105 14. Actively supports and encourages all relevant stakeholders in society to
106 implement aspects of a 'Pan-European Civic Education Course' in the
107 curricula and at all levels of education in order to increase awareness of
108 Europe's common roots and various cultural backgrounds;

109 15. Encourages the European Parliament, the European Commission and
110 Member States to improve the use of new technologies in order to inform
111 citizens about their opportunities for political participation;

112 16. Suggests promoting political participation through direct participatory activities
113 in every aspect of formal and non-formal education, which encourage even the
114 youngest generation to reflect on participatory processes and eventually
115 becoming politically and socially active;

116 17. Recommends closer cooperation between policy-makers and local
117 associations as well as all kinds of educational facilities highlighting simulation
118 events such as 'School Parliament', 'Europe at School', 'Model European
119 Union' or 'Moot Court' as promising examples;

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121 Stressing our role as JEF – promoting young ideas to empower political participation

122 18. Further invites our sections to internally and externally raise awareness on the
123 political participation of the young generation;

124 19. Notes in conclusion that only a strong federal Union, endowed with democratic
125 legitimacy and a mature economic, monetary, fiscal, social and political union,
126 can restore citizens' trust in its capacity to positively affect their lives. Only by
127 strengthening European democracy can participation develop as a more
128 empowering and gratifying experience for citizens.