



YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENT: A SHARED OPPORTUNITY

INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership – EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments and the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan organized a youth engagement workshop for parliamentarians and youth representatives. That candid discussion and exchange of youth engagement strategies serves as the basis of these key insights.

What can parliaments do to bring more young people into their work? How can the engagement of young people translate into meaningful input in decision-making? Discussion at an INTER PARES peer-to-peer parliamentary workshop devoted to youth engagement in parliaments in Uzbekistan in July 2024 provided eight key insights **for parliaments in their work towards meaningful engagement of young people.**

1. Write a new narrative: young people as game changers



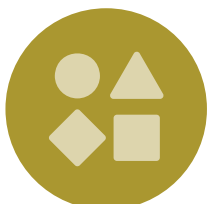
Effective youth participation starts from the premise that young people can make valuable contributions to society and have the right to help shape the laws and policies governing their society. Whatever the challenge, young people should be listened to and have a voice in crafting solutions. The single most important building block in tackling issues that impact youth is **to adopt a narrative that embraces young people's potential.** This narrative can foster specific strategies based on the premise that youth are not only a group that is to be helped, but as a group that can help.

2. Recognise, prioritise and promote young people



Recognising, prioritising and promoting the engagement of young people must be **a distinct area of focus for parliaments.** As parliaments play a critical role in youth participation in decision-making, specific efforts to bring young people into parliamentary work, such as robust mentorship programmes, put youth front and center.

3. Understand young people in their diversity



Effective and sustainable youth participation demands a **nuanced understanding of who and what we mean by 'young people.'** There is no 'one' profile: young people differ across age groups, gender, geography (in particular, urban versus rural), ethnic background, socio-economic status, etc., and these areas intersecting. As a result, the respective opportunities and challenges youth come across will differ and their access to parliamentary debate and decision-making will vary. Parliaments should leverage youth bodies and research institutions to better understand the lived realities of young people.

4. (Re)connect with young people



Parliaments must constantly assess how they connect with young people. Traditional methods – websites, parliament visits, guided tours – can be updated, and newer initiatives – youth parliaments and social media – strengthened. Even a small team can make parliament interesting and engaging for young people. Initiatives should be **tailored to young people in approach, content and tone** as much as possible. Ask youth what they need or want, engage staff with youth or teaching expertise, and involve youth structures, especially at the local and regional levels.

5. Meet young people where they are



Participation is a two-way street. In the case of young people, who may lack the means, skills or opportunity to make their way to parliament or to engage in complex, technical conversations, parliaments should **go beyond opening their own doors**, to reach out and meet young people where they are, both **in person and online**. In person visits to local constituencies or youth organisations are effective. Online, **social media is indispensable**, both for individual MPs and parliament as an institution, as a starting point for more meaningful exchanges.

6. Invest in civic education



Quality civic education is the backbone of meaningful youth participation. All young people should be aware of what parliament is, what it does or should do, and what opportunities exist for them. Concerted and sustained effort should be made to teach young people about their political system and rights, using age-appropriate methods with clear support from parliament, delivered in an effective way.

7. Institutionalise youth participation



A critical building block for youth participation is the **adoption of constitutional, legislative and institutional frameworks** that recognise the role of young people as citizens and that embed youth engagement and voice. These frameworks should provide a pathway for the direct participation of children and young people in parliamentary work.

8. Sustain a 'new normal'



Sustaining youth participation requires offering young people meaningful opportunities to contribute to the work of parliament that are **endorsed by senior decision-makers in the institution, that enjoy sufficient practical and financial support, and that are maintained in the long run**. Practices should be revised, as needed, especially in light of feedback from young people, Members, and staff. Ultimately, **effective youth participation requires a shift in norms**, not just protocol or practice. As more parliaments bring more young people into their visiting centres, committees, plenary meetings and administrations, mutual understanding and trust can build and genuine dialogue can develop.

For more visit:

INTER PARES E-learning course on [Youth Participation: Pathways for Parliaments](#)

INTER PARES [Youth Explorer: a Self-Scan for Parliaments](#)