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Political Participation of Young People and Democracy in Europe

Literature Review and Overview of Quantitative International Databases

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Research on children, young people and families at the interface of science, politics and practice

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Abstract

The promotion of democratic awareness and democratic values among young people in Europe is an important goal of European youth policy. In various documents on democracy and young people, European institutions assume that increased participation among young people results in strengthening a democratic Europe. Measuring democratic values and participation of young people is therefore a core element of European evidence-based policy, resulting in a massive body of studies that address statistical relationships between participation, democracy and young people. This brings up the question of how guiding concepts like participation, democratic attitude, political interest and civic citizenship are measured and are compared at the European level. This working paper is part of an ongoing research project to find answers to these questions and in this sense can give first or preliminary answers.

The paper consists of two main parts. First, we present an overview of international databases and surveys on democracy and participation. Second, based on Systematic Literature Review (SLR), we analyse 78 recent studies, which use these data to draw conclusions on the relationship between democracy, participation and young people.

With our paper, we want to contribute critically to the discussion on the comparability of data and studies on democracy and participation, as well as to the discussion on the relevance of these concepts and the conclusions drawn from them for European youth policy.

Keywords

Democratic awareness – Democratic values – Political participation – International databases – European youth policy

1 Introduction

Youth participation plays an important role in European youth policy. On the one hand, it is one of its central principles. Both key youth policy documents of the European Union (EU) (most recently, Council of the European Union 2018) and key documents of the Council of Europe (most recently, Council of Europe 2020) emphasise that young people have the right to be involved in the development and implementation of policies affecting them. It is emphasised that forms of participation must be "meaningful", without defining explicitly what this means. Only in doing so, however, can participation contribute to inclusion, participatory governance and accountability. With the co-management system in the Council of Europe and the EU Youth Dialogue, both institutions have developed instruments to ensure youth participation in their own political decision-making processes.

On the other hand, participation is a field of action in its own right and a means of promoting democratic awareness and democratic values among young people in Europe. Both EU and Council of Europe argue in their documents that increased participation of young people will lead to the strengthening of a democratic Europe. This is based on the guiding idea that inclusive participatory experiences – not only, but especially regarding political processes – strengthen young people's affinity to democratic culture. Both institutions have therefore defined participation and democracy as central themes of European youth policy within the fields of action "engage" (Council of the European Union 2018, pp. 3–4) and "revitalising pluralistic democracy" (Council of Europe 2020). Against the context of the debate on young people's disenchantment with politics (e.g. Kitanova 2020) and the observations of growing anti-democratic tendencies in Europe (e.g. IDEA 2021; Merkel 2021), this focus comes as no surprise.

At the same time, it is pointed out that participation and democracy can only have a positive societal impact if they are designed to be inclusive. However, research shows that political participation goes hand in hand with experiences of inclusion and exclusion (Cammaerts et al. 2016; Tatar and Apateanu 2019). The political claim to make participation and democracy inclusive in the youth sector is particularly directed at including "young people who have only limited access to participatory processes [...] as a result of individual or structural disadvantages" (Council of the European Union 2020).

These and other links between participation, democracy and young people are the focus of this paper. In an attempt to find the underlying cause of the diversity of research on this phenomenon, it is important to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative data and studies dealing with democratic values and participation of young people. While qualitative studies often focus on reasons for young people's participation or forms of participation, quantitative studies concentrate on the relationships between variables. This paper focuses on the massive body of international databases and surveys as well as studies that address statistical relationships between participation, democracy and young people, thus limiting the scope of the study to the European level and to quantitative data sources.

This paper is based on a Systematic Literature Review and provides both an overview of the databases and surveys as well as the review of the findings of a collection of 78 studies, which use these data to draw conclusions regarding the relationship between democracy, participation and young people. The studies are then clustered based on keywords. The aim of the paper is to explore how guiding concepts like participation, democratic attitude, political interest, civic citizenship and engagement are empirically measured and compared at the European level. Thus, the paper aims to contribute to the systematisation of the state of knowledge in the field of quantitative participation research at the international level by finding an answer to the question: "What quantitative data sources can be used to study young people's political participation and what statements are made on the basis of these data?"

To do so, this paper is divided in four sections. The first section briefly explains the methodology used (2). The second section provides an overview of international quantitative databases that have analytical potential at the European level with regard to political participation of young people (3). In section three, the results of the Systematic Literature Review of studies on political participation of young people, based on the identified international survey data, are presented (4). The fourth section discusses the findings and limitations of the study and presents an outlook regarding further research (5). This paper presents an interim status of the project, with 30 of the 78 studies found having been analysed.

2 Methodology

Our research has two main aims: first, to identify which international quantitative datasets contain statements about youth participation and political attitudes, and second, which conclusions about participation, democracy and young people are drawn by studies based on these datasets.

In a first step, the data sets and the studies based thereupon had to be identified. For this purpose, the method of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) according to Wetterich and Plänitz (2021) was used. SLR is a method for organising and summarising large amounts of information on a specific topic in a meaningful way, then working analytically on a research question with the results of the literature review. Application of such a systematic approach helps to identify research gaps and at the same time points out possible weaknesses in previous reviews.

An SLR has two advantages over conventional literature reviews. First, it can be used to identify, select, evaluate and summarise the majoritiy of empirical studies relevant to the research question. The results includes those studies with an explicit and rigorous (i.e. precisely described and strictly implemented rules) design, allowing the findings to be clearly contextualised and analysed with clear research intentions. The method of SLR thus assumes a hierarchy of empirical evidence: what can be said empirically about the world is to be derived from studies whose designs are both explicit and rigorous. The second advantage of SLR arises from the research principles of objectivity and truth. SLR is subject to the assumption that the findings of individual research articles are usually more trusted than they may deserve (Wetterich and Plänitz 2021, p. 14), thus being accepted as evidence and cited in literature analyses. However, the reference to a scientific source is only a fraction of the available information as the author cited may represent a point of view that is refuted by another author. Such a bias can be avoided, if the totality of the available information is considered and analysed (Wetterich and Plänitz 2021, p. 23). The SLR is a suitable tool for this purpose.

This paper is based on quantitative SLR, i.e. it includes only quantitative primary research, as opposed to qualitative SLR, including qualitative research, and mixed methods SLR, including both qualitative and quantitative studies.

In order to conduct the SLR as effectively as possible, and in adaptation of Wetterich and Plänitz (2021), we decided in a first step to conduct an initial sample based on the research question – thus the subject area and scope of the study. This allowed us to define criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies and to establish an initial impression of the field. The resulting criteria for the SLR were: English as the language of the article as well as a timeframe of two decades, up to and including December 2021. The search terms were also defined, leading to five search algorithms for electronic databases:

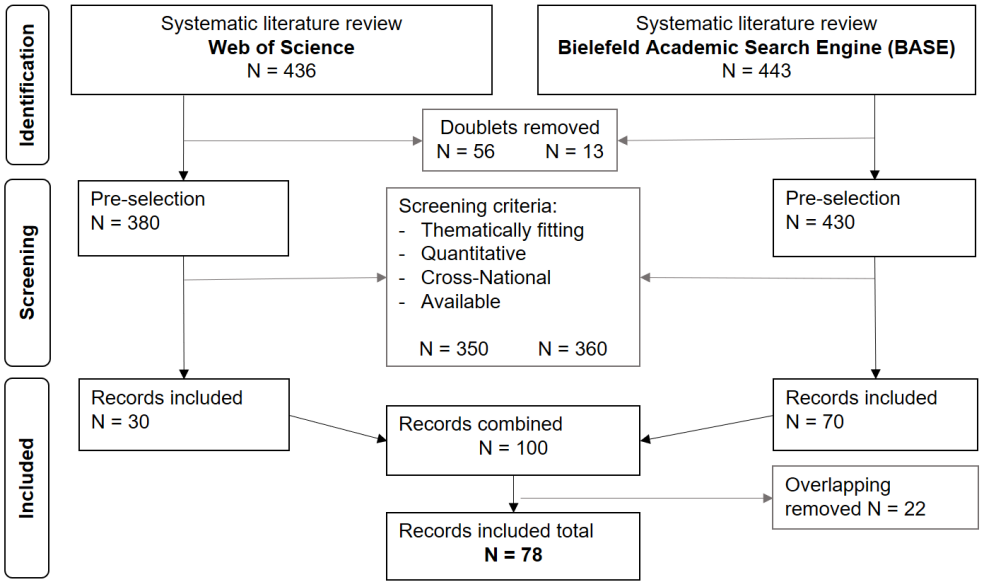
"youth" or "young" and "europe*" in the title, then the term followed by

- "politi*"
- "participation"
- "democra*" (thus including democracy, democratic, etc.)
- "engag*" (thus including engage, engagement, engaging, etc.)
- "citizenship"

Subsequently, the concrete research took place on online databases. To cover as much literature as possible, we decided to search on two platforms: BASE, the "Bielefeld Academic Search Engine", and the "Web of Science". The literature found was collected via the literature management software Citavi®.

The results of the search were presented in a PRISMA flow diagram (Moher et al. 2009). It shows how screening and selection of relevant studies took place after a search.

Figure 1: (PRISMA) Flow diagram of the systematic literature review



Source: own figure

During the identification phase of the SLR, both databases were searched and duplicates were removed. In the screening phase, the abstracts of the studies found were read and assessed in terms of their accuracy of fit. The criteria was that they had to be thematically relevant, refer exclusively to quantitative data, and have a cross-national analytical perspective. In addition, the study had to be accessible to us, for example through open access or library lending. In the third phase, a few

articles were removed in a final step because they referred to the same study, leading to a total body of 78 studies.[1]

Once this ultimately valid pool of studies had been compiled, the text passages relevant to answering the research question were coded. This – still ongoing – process follows qualitative content-analytical procedures according to Mayring (2015). The coding was supported by the software MAXQDA®.

According to Wetterich and Plänitz (2021) this analysis represents the core of SLR by connecting different statements from the literature, interweaving them into a story of their own. The literature is summarised, by being reassembled and interpreted, thus forming a synthesis of the gathered information (Wetterich and Plänitz 2021, p. 79).

[1] A table in Appendix 2 lists all studies.

3 Overview of Data

The studies identified in the SLR are all based on a total of 28 different databases and statistics, which are presented in Table 1.[2] Each of these databases contains constructs related to topics relevant to participation and democracy, such as attitude measurements on perceptions of democracy, social involvement, political interest, and political participation. The various databases and statistics found can be divided into four different categories. First, there are databases based on official administrative data, like the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions. Second, there are data based on classical surveys. They range from large general surveys that focus on the entire population (like the European Social Survey or the World Value Survey), to survey data mostly collected via schools (such as the International Student Assessment) and to databases collected within the framework of large European projects (such as MYPLACE or CATCH-EyoU) that focus directly on young people.

Since it is not possible to discuss all 28 databases and statistics in the context of this article, four selected databases from their respective categories are presented here as examples to illustrate the range of databases and statistics. These are the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (official administrative data), the World Value Survey (WVS) (general population survey) and the data collected in the project "CATCH-EyoU" Constructing Active Citizenship with European Youth (European project data).

The first difference the databases hold is their geographical coverage. Whereas the WVS has global coverage (currently 62 countries), official European statistics cover the EU and associated countries, meaning the data from a specific European project is limited to a selection of European countries.

Furthermore, the databases show differences concerning the number of cases covered in the data. The highest number of cases can of course be found in official statistics (N=260 000, age >16), then WVS (N= 76 000, age >16). The European project has relatively few cases in comparison (N=10 000, age 14-30). In the analysis however, this difference does not play a role because the lower number of cases is related to the smaller number of involved countries and a restriction of the age group.

[2] Table 1 contains relevant information on the databases: abbreviation, full name, geographical region for which data is available, organisation behind the data collection, survey period, number of cases and age of the respondents. All abbreviations are explained in a table in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Data bases at European level containing traits regarding participation of young people

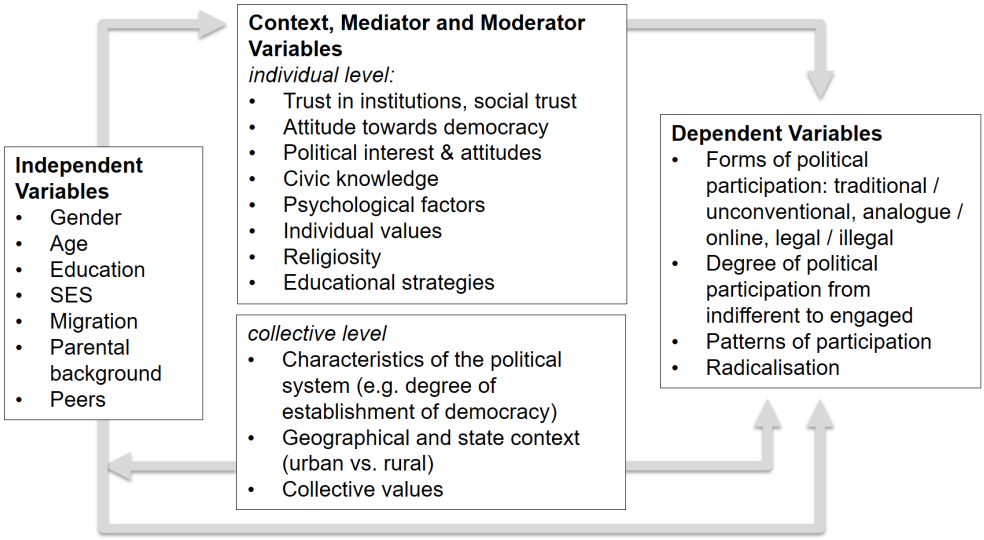
Abb.	Name	Region	Organisation	Time	≈N	Age
CATCH-EyoU	Constructing AcTive Citizen-sHip with European Youth	8 Europ. countries	Project	2016-2017	10 000	14-30
CCC	Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualising Contestation	8 + 2 Latin America	Project	2009-2012	15 000	N/A+
CILS4EU	Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in 4 European Countries	4 Europ. countries	Project	2010-2013	50 000	13-15
CivED	Civic Education Study	Global	IEA	1996-2000	90 000	13-15
CSES	Comparative Study of Electoral Systems	Global	GESIS, CBS	2000-2019	56 000	15+
EB	Eurobarometer	EU	EU	since 1974	10 000	15+
EES	The European Election Studies	EU 28	VWF, MZES	since 1979	26 000	18+
EQLS	European Quality of Life Surveys	EU + 5	Eurofound	2003-2016	37 000	18+
ESS	European Social Survey	Europe	ERIC	since 2002	46 000	15+
Eu38	Europe 2038	7 Europ. countries	Project	2016	4 000	16-25
EURYKA	Reinventing Democracy in Europe	9 Europ. countries	Project	2017	18 000	18+
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions	EU + 5	Eurostat	since 2004	260 000	16+
EVS	European Values Study	Europe	EVSF	since 1981	70 000	15+
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Education Study	Global	IEA	2009-2016	94 000	Nov 14
ICILS	International Computer and Information Literacy Study	Global	IEA	2013-2018	47 000	13-14
ISCWeB	International Survey of Children's Lives and Well-Being	Global	ISCI	2011-2019	128 000	Jun 14
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme	global	FORS	since 1984	> 30 000	18+
LIVEWHAT	Living With Hard Times	9 Europ. countries	Project	2015	5 000	18-35
MOVE	Mapping mobility	6 Europ. countries	Project	2018	> 5 000	18-29
MYPLACE	Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement	14 Europ. countries	Project	2012-2013	20 000	16-25
OCEI	Orientations of Young Men & Women to Citizenship & Europ. Identity	6 Europ. countries	Project	2002	4 000	18-24
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies	global	OECD	since 2012	>100 000	16+
PISA	International Student Assessment	Global	OECD	since 2000	> 600 000	15-17
RAY	Research-based analysis of European Youth Programmes	Europe	RAY Network	since 2015	> 50 000	15-30+
WVS	World Value Survey	Global	WVSA	since 1981	76 000	16+
YOUNEX	Youth Unemployment and Exclusion in Europe	6 Europ. countries	Project	2010	> 7 000	18-34
YPiDL	Youth Participation in Democratic Life	6 Europ. countries	EACEA	2011	> 7 000	15-30
YPMP	Young Party Members in Europe	6 Europ. countries	Project	2006	3 000	18-25

Source: own table

4 Literature Review

The 28 databases and statistics are used in a total of 78 studies on young people, participation and democracy to make statements about statistical relationships between the categories. The overview in Figure 2 represents the results from our coding of variable types and correlations as they emerge from the studies, in an attempt to visualise the different correlations examined.

Figure 2: Observed characteristics with correlations as code system



Source: own figure

These characteristics are based on the respective explanatory models of the studies. For example, there are studies that look at the influence of gender (independent variable) on participation patterns (dependent variable). However, there are many other effects and explanatory patterns that are also examined. In addition to the independent and dependent variables, the context, mediator and moderator variables are of particular importance. An example of a classic mediation variable would be socio-economic status mediating political interest, which then mediates political behaviour or participation patterns.

When looking at the correlations presented in Figure 2, it is important to note that an SLR is about systematising the observed relationships in the studies, not about developing an explanatory model. There is certainly plenty of room for debate about how the arrows are set and what the relationships really are. We know from the methodological literature – for example, in regard to spurious relationships and the control of third variables – that measuring causal relationships is anything but trivial. The above figure is thus simply a systematization of the findings of all 78 studies, along their specific statements about measured correlations, rather than the first step to an explanatory model.

In the following, we go into more detail on some of the correlations. We would like to remind readers that this paper can only provide an interim analysis, since at the point of publishing this article, only about one third (N=30) of the studies found have been included in the analysis. These are essentially the most recent studies, covering roughly 2018 to 2021.

4.1 Independent Variables

First, we look at the group of independent variables. The independent variables examined in the studies are gender (N=10), age (N=29), socio-economic status (SES) (N=11), migration (N=2), parental background (N=2), peers (N=1) and (higher) education (N=7).

Age is examined as an independent variable in many studies. This involves differences in European identity, feelings of exclusion from public affairs, political interest, and attitudes towards as well as satisfaction with democracy. Younger people feel a high degree of belonging to Europe and have a strong European identity (Losito et al. 2018, Strohmeier et al. 2019). Compared to older generations, young people do not have the same level of interest in the democratic decision-making process. They feel alienated from public affairs and it can be shown that, in a number of European countries, young people are less likely to vote and participate in formal politics when compared to older people (Briggs 2017, Dahl et al. 2019). In this respect, however, there is a clear difference between young people under 18 and those over 18. As young people move from their teenage years, in which they are not yet allowed to vote, to the first stages of their political adulthood and are given the right to formally participate in the democratic life of their country, the EU and their local community, their interest in engaging in political debate increases significantly. Therefore age is a positive predictor of participation in conventional and unconventional political activities (Kucabaand and Gkinopoulos 2021, García-Albacete 2014). Some studies state that young people are generally less interested in politics than adults (García-Albacete 2014). However, this also depends on the topics. Briggs (2017) also looks at the level of political interest among young people and concludes that they are not uninterested in politics in general, but their focus lies on specific issues (e.g. animal rights, environment) rather than general political representation (Briggs 2017). Regarding the European institutions, most studies have shown that age has a negative impact on trust, finding that the younger the respondent, the higher their trust (Gonzálvez-Gallego and Nieto-Torrejón 2021). But, this is not true for all of Europe, as Quaranta et al. (2021) find, that in Southern Europe, young citizens tend to be dissatisfied with and distrust politics, therefore not getting involved as much (Quaranta et al. 2021). Some studies look at young people's attitudes towards democracy and report that young people fully believe in democracy (Cammaerts et al. 2016, García-Albacete 2014, Zilinsky 2019). However, young people's level of satisfaction with democracy, as it functions in their country, varies widely across Europe (Briggs 2017). In Denmark, for example, the level of satisfaction with democracy is high. In Greece, there are significant numbers of young people who say they are dissatisfied with the way democracy works (Briggs 2017). Also, after the financial crisis, there was a general decline in satisfaction with

democracy generally in Europe that now it is no longer possible to speak of a substantial correlation between age and democracy ratings (Zilinsky 2019).

Socio-economic factors such as social inequality and educational attainment are important determinants of participation. Some studies indicate that these factors are highly determining for participation and in this context, there is a risk of social and political exclusion of groups of young people and their potential radicalisation (Sloam 2016, 2014; Kitanova 2020).

Overall, a number of studies report large, significant class differences in terms of characteristics relevant to political participation. For example, young people with lower SES are less positive about democracy. They have fewer resources that would enable them to participate fully in the democratic life of their society. They are less likely to participate in elections at local, national or EU level and tend to have less confidence in the political process and in their political representation (Chevalier 2019, Grasso and Giugni 2021, Kitanova 2020, Merlă 2018, Sloam et al. 2021, Tatar and Apateanu 2019). These correlations are also mediated by lower life satisfaction among young people with lower SES (Tatar and Apateanu 2019) and are particularly significant among migrants (Diaz-Chorne et al. 2018). The correlation between income and interest in politics is also negative (Cammaerts et al. 2016). However, young people with low SES resort to other means to influence public affairs (Dahl et al. 2019). Nonetheless, another study found indications, that unemployment is a negative predictor of unconventional political engagement (Kucabaand and Gkinopoulos 2021).

Gender is also a key independent variable that many studies focus on. Grasso and Smith (2021) find no significant gender differences in political participation in most countries (Grasso and Smith 2021). Nevertheless, there are divergent results. For political interest, there is a finding that male young people are more likely than female young people to be politically interested, as well as males being more likely to state that they are politically engaged and more confident about their political knowledge (Grasso and Smith 2021, Hochman and García-Albacete 2019, Merlă 2018). Being female is also detrimental to conventional political activity (Blaskó et al. 2019, Kucaba and Gkinopoulos 2021). Male young people are more likely to want their country to leave the EU (Strohmeier et al. 2019), whereas young women identify more strongly with Europe according to Landberg (2019). Losito et al. (2018) come to the opposite conclusion. In some forms of participation, especially in less confrontational and unconventional activities, young women are more active than young men. Young women are also more active than men in political activism and community participation are, but they are less active in online political participation than men (Grasso and Smith 2021). Young women are also ahead of young men on the responsible citizenship scale and are more tolerant of ethnic minorities as another study found (Blaskó et al. 2019).

It is also interesting to look at the studies that deal with the connections between education and participation. There is a significant positive impact of formal education on political participation, especially in traditional forms of participation (Blaskó et al. 2019, Diaz-Chorne et al. 2018, Hoskins et al. 2008, Kitanova 2020, Lositoet al. 2018, Sloam et al. 2021). In formal education, moreover, positive student-teacher

relationships are positively related to values of responsible citizenship as well as institutional trust (Blaskó et al. 2019). In the field of non-formal education, a positive impact of Erasmus+ Youth programmes on active participation is demonstrated (Bárta et al. 2018). A higher level of education has a positive impact on engagement in non-conventional political activities (Kucaba and Gkinopoulos 2021). Sloam et al. (2021) find that the importance of higher education over and above social class is a key determinant of civic and political participation, as participation in higher education promotes civic and political participation among young people, helping to neutralise differences between high- and low-income groups. The influence of income is thus less strong than the influence of attending or not attending higher education (Sloam et al. 2021).

Two studies also examine the independent variables of immigrant background, peer interaction and parental background. The results suggest that immigrants and children of immigrants are more likely than natives to be interested in politics (Hochman and García-Albacete 2019, p. 262). Young people whose parents talk about politics at home are twice as likely to be interested in politics compared to respondents whose parents do not talk about politics at home (Hochman and García-Albacete 2019, p. 264). Young people who rated their parents as very interested in political and social affairs scored higher on all citizenship scales, as well as on the institutional trust scale, and were more likely to express an intention to participate in both elections and other political activities (Blaskó et al. 2019). Furthermore, young people with mixed friendships are more likely to be politically interested, compared to respondents with homogeneous friendships (Hochman and García-Albacete 2019).

4.2 Context, Mediator and Moderator Variables

When it comes to the contextual factors that are significant for participation, the studies distinguish between different groups of these factors. On the one hand, there are influencing factors at the collective level, such as the constitution of the political system in the respective states, the urban-rural divide or the collectively shared values in a region (N=4). On the other hand, a broad spectrum of individual contextual variables are examined (N=19). These are, for example, individual values and attitudes, civic knowledge, political interest and attitudes towards the EU and democracy, trust in institutions, satisfaction with institutions and general life satisfaction as well as psychological factors such as political efficacy. Less frequently (N=3), the influence of social media use and celebrity endorsements are examined.

The first group of studies looks into the geographical and governmental context. Some authors report a higher probability of youth participation in established democracies (Kitanova 2020; Mirazchiyski et al. 2014).

The urban-rural comparison is also considered. In this respect, it can be said that low civic participation must be seen as a general problem and that there are no significant differences between urban and rural areas (Starosta 2010). However, there are large differences between European countries (with Portugal, Spain and Eastern European countries having the lowest participation rate).

Another group of studies concerns young people's identification with EU values and their indirect influence on participation. It is concluded that there are some positive effects of values such as tradition, conformity and collectivity on participation (Kucaba and Gkinopoulos 2021). A strong European identity, sense of belonging and trust of young people in the EU/democracy is also stated (European Commission 2013; Losito et al. 2018). More traditionalist values seem to have a detrimental effect on political activism, as more left-wing economic values seem to have a generally positive effect on participation (Grasso and Smith 2021).

Attitudes towards the EU in general are examined in some studies on a descriptive and cross-country basis. Friedrich and Nitsch (2019), for example, report indifferent to slightly negative attitudes towards the EU in Germany, Poland, Sweden, Spain and the UK.

In the previous section, we discussed political interest depending on independent variables. In this context, we look at political interest as a direct variable influencing political participation. In the studies reviewed, Blaskó et al. (2019) and Dahl et al. (2019), for example, examine this relationship. Young people who are more interested in political and social issues show a significantly higher interest in participating in elections as well as in other political activities than young people who are less interested (Blaskó et al. 2019, Dahl et al. 2019).

When it comes to the attitude towards democracy, an important psychological factor that has been linked with civic and political participation is political efficacy, namely the self-belief that one can understand and influence political decisions (Tatar and Apateanu 2019, p. 13). Overall, young people have slightly higher levels of subjective political efficacy: almost 42% of young people tend to believe that their voice counts in the EU, compared to 39% of adults (Tatar and Apateanu 2019, p. 13).

Other studies show that young people who actively use social media show higher levels of interest in active political participation. Social media and the internet can therefore help to improve interest and participation rates. However, this is not without limitations; rather, it depends on the type of media use and which online activities are involved. Social media is only a tool and does not in itself have the capacity to promote young people's political participation (Blaskó et al. 2019, Merlă 2018).

With regard to social and institutional trust, some studies show that it has a fundamentally positive effect on life satisfaction (Gonzálvez-Gallego and Nieto-Torrejón 2021, Chevalier 2019) as well as a positive effect on political participation. In particular, social trust has a positive effect on engagement in unconventional political activities (Kucabaand and Gkinopoulos 2021). At the same time, alienation from the political system, i.e. the lack of institutional trust, is one of the strongest determinants of unconventional political participation (Dahl et al. 2019). According to Chevalier (2019), institutional trust is mediated through political interest and SES.

It is also interesting to look at the identification patterns identified by Landberg et al. (2019). The authors were able to empirically identify five types of young people based on their European and national identification, namely a low identification

group with particularly low scores on national identification, a European and national identification group and a no identification group with low scores on both identification scales, as well as a dual identification group with high scores on both identification scales (Landberg et al. 2019). According to the authors, young people in the Unidentified cluster (low national and European identification) show high levels of tolerance and participation and therefore seem to be somehow against the system, but still politically engaged.

4.3 Dependent Variables

In the previous two sections, we discussed how independent variables or contextual factors influence young people's political participation, which relationships between the independent variables and the contextual factors or the contextual factors among themselves exist, according to the analysed studies. The following presents the findings from the studies that only deal with the target variable itself. These are, on the one hand, descriptive presentations of participation behaviour of young people in a country comparison, and on the other hand, the design of different participation types or patterns. In detail, the most frequently patterns of participation (N=6), voter turnout (N=4), levels of political involvement (N=4) and political alienation (N=2) are examined here. Furthermore, individual studies focus on political protest and social movements (N=1 each).

As for the different forms of youth participation, the studies show that there has been a shift in the forms of participation away from traditional forms (e.g. elections, Grasso 2018; Briggs 2017). Young people are less active in these ways of participation and their trust in them has decreased. At the same time, however, a high interest in participation in general and a belief in democracy and Europe are observed. Furthermore, studies show differences between adults and young people in terms of forms of participation. For young people, it is more about self-referential participation with a great importance of the reality of life and the interests of young people (Gozzo and Sampugnaro 2017; Lejeune 2015; Sloam 2016, 2014; Schnaudt and Weinhardt 2017; Farthing 2010).

Enchikova et al. (2019) identify participation patterns in their study. They form the categories of campaigner, activist, volunteer, supporter, online and indifferent. These participation patterns remain relatively stable over time.

Tatar and Apateanu (2019) distinguish between political and civic engagement in terms of participation patterns. Political engagement refers to an individual's engagement with political institutions, processes and decision-making. In contrast, the term civic engagement is used to refer to an individual's engagement with the concerns, interests and common good of a community (Tatar and Apateanu 2019).

The longitudinal perspective suggests that young people today participate less, viewed relatively, in both institutional and non-institutional activities than they did decades ago (García Albacete 2014).

Loukakis and Portos (2020) define protest among young people. From their point of view, protest as a form of participation by young people is characterised by the fact that, as protesters, they usually challenge those in power, especially when the issues of demands are related to education, welfare and socio-economic reforms that are the responsibility of the state (Loukakis and Portos 2020).

Dahl et al. (2019) write about young people's non-voting that non-voters cognitive awareness of politics is a distinguishing feature that differentiates an apathetic non-voter from an alienated non-voter. Some young people do not care enough about politics to participate through its representative channels, while other young people abstain because they have the competence to judge the extent to which the act of voting benefits them (Dahl et al. 2019). Merlă (2018) also observes young people's participation in elections and concludes that a positive trend can be expected (Merlă 2018). However, voter turnout varies greatly between countries (Losito et al. 2018).

5 Conclusion

The aim of this working paper is to find initial answers to the question of how guiding concepts like participation, democratic attitude, political interest and civic citizenship are measured and are compared at the European level. As this paper is based on ongoing research, the answer to this question, referring to the overview of the quantitative data bases, the literature review as well as to the methodological approach, is pending. Nonetheless, some first conclusions can be drawn. They relate to the contents of the conclusions of the studies examined and to the methodology underlying the Working Paper.

When it comes to the contents of the studies, the systematic literature review shows a number of contradictory and inconsistent findings. One such example is that some studies find significant differences in attitudes towards democracy between age groups, while others do not. From a methodological point of view, such contradictory findings may partly be explained by different operationalisations of the constructs and the different approaches shown in the various studies. For example, at the item level, even in terms of content, identical questions about democracy in the survey tools of the different databases depict having different wordings as well as different response categories. The resulting indices are also formed in different ways. It would be interesting for further research to examine such differences in more detail at interesting exemplary intersections.

Overall, the synopsis of the findings shows some facts that are not surprising. For example, it becomes very clear that there is a difference between the political participation of young people compared to that of older people. Even within the group of young people, many studies (at least those that covered this age group in the first place) consistently report significant differences between the under-16 and the over-16 years old. The findings are also very clear with regard to socio-economic status. Underprivileged young people have a lower chance of political participation, with the studies concluding that therefore, they are also less positive about democracy. However, the findings show that, more than socio-economic status, a higher level of education was observed to be a stronger predictor for the participation of young people. It follows that as the factors that influence participation behaviour are so diverse and complex, the overview in this working paper can only be a first step into understanding the topic better.

The examined studies show that young people, when it comes to their attitudes towards democracy, have faith in democracy. An important psychological factor for this is the expectation of political self-efficacy. However, the level of satisfaction of young people with democracy, as it functions in their respective countries, varies widely across Europe. In particular after the financial crisis, the studies show a general and not age-dependent decline in satisfaction with democracy all throughout Europe. This decrease was so considerable, that in the latest findings it is not possible to find a substantial correlation between age and democracy ratings.

Finally, the contents of the studies examined show that the interaction of education and political participation is an interesting field of research. There are many different approaches to measuring participation patterns, and this is where some of the most interesting findings are observed. For example, Landberg et al. (2019) argue that alienation from public life promotes alternative forms of participation. These findings are also very indifferent with regard to gender (see the results of Blaskó et al. 2019, Grasso and Smith 2021, Hochman and García-Albacete 2019, Merlă 2018). Depending on which participation patterns are considered, the studies report different correlations. Therefore, the topics mentioned would be good starting points for further research.

There are also some conclusions to be drawn with regard to the methodology underlying the Working Paper. If one wants to generate reliable knowledge, the focus of a possible meta-analysis must also be strongly limited. In doing so, future research should concentrate on a specific context. For example results like those of Sloam et al. (2021), could be good starting points for developing future research topics. This was the authors' finding, which should be highlighted again here, that the stronger predictor of participation behaviour is higher education and not socio-economic status.

As far as the overview of the data bases given here is concerned, it must be noted that it does not claim to be exhaustive. It does provide an initial overview of the currently existing international data sources in the field of youth political participation. But there is still much potential for future research in this field. For example, the identified databases could not yet be studied in depth. We had also planned to gain insights into the operationalisation of constructs such as political participation or attitudes towards democracy, political interest, etc., i.e. to take an analytical look at them. This will also be the subject of further work.

Central to this is the realisation that there is a relatively large number of different data sources, whereby the continuous surveys and the official statistics should certainly be given special attention. The experiences from the European research projects should be used here to further develop the regular surveys as well as the official statistics in order to contribute to the further development of European social reporting as a whole. The question of the extent to which it makes sense that there could also be international cooperation in national surveys should also be further explored.

The methodological approach using software-supported SLR has been useful, given the surprising quantity of material, especially when taking into account, that the research had only been conducted on two research platforms. In addition, subsequent research with revised and expanded search criteria and search algorithms could ensure that knowledge in this area continues to grow and that no relevant sources of knowledge are overlooked. Nevertheless, the preliminary work done in this paper is a good basis to generate research ideas and directions that can now be implemented to further explore the possibilities and analysis potentials in the international databases. This is seen as an important basis for the development of scientific monitoring of youth policy.

Another major limitation of the present study is that there are strong limitations in defining the criteria for considering knowledge sources. For example, national, qualitative and non-English language studies were excluded. However, for a comprehensive overview, this research should also be taken into account.

Methodologically, other tools could be used, such as quantitative content analysis methods to complement the one presented here. This would possibly have an added value compared to a classical literature review of the studies. Further steps could be to conduct a statistical meta-analysis or other secondary analyses with suitable quantitative methods.

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8 Appendix

Appendix 1: Abbreviations

ACES	Amsterdam Center for European Studies
ANSF	American National Science Foundation
CPS	Center for Political Studies University of Michigan
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
ERIC	European Research Infrastructure Consortium
EVSF	European Value Survey Foundation
FORS	Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences
GESIS	Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ISCI	International Society of Child Indicators
MZES	Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung
VWF	Volkswagen Foundation
WVSA	World Values Survey Association

Appendix 2: Studies at European level that analyse participation regarding different forms of participation and contextual factors significant for participation of young people, sorted in chronological and alphabetical order

Author and Year	Title	Database	Topic
Bay and Blekesaune (2002)	Youth, unemployment and political marginalisation	EB	Politics
Torney-Purta (2002)	Patterns in the Civic Knowledge, Engagement, and Attitudes of European Adolescents	ICCS	Engagement
Hoskins et al. (2006)	Measuring Active Citizenship in Europe	ESS	Methodology
Esser and Vreese (2007)	Comparing Young Voters' Political Engagement in the United States and Europe	EES (not ESS)	Politics
Fieldhouse et al. (2007)	Something about young people or something about elections?	ESS	Participation
Gaiser and Rijke (2007)	Political participation of youth. Young Germans in the European context	EB	Participation
Hoskins (2007)	Measuring Active Citizenship: A comparison of current developments in international surveys	CivED; ESS; WVS	Methodology
Georgi (2008)	Citizens in the Making: Youth and Citizenship Education in Europe	CivED	Citizenship
Hoskins et al. (2008)	Does Formal Education Have an Impact on Active Citizenship Behaviour?	ESS	Citizenship
Spannring et al. (2008)	What Leads Young People to Identify with Europe?	OCEI	Politics
Bruter and Harrison (2009)	Tomorrow's Leaders?	YPMP	Democracy
European Commission (2009)	European research on youth	EB	Participation
Hoskins and Mascherini (2009)	Measuring Active Citizenship through the Development of a Composite Indicator	ESS	Methodology
Starosta (2010)	Civic participation in rural Europe	ESS	Participation
Hoskins et al. (2011)	Comparing Civic Competence among European Youth: Composite and Domain-Specific Indicators	CivED	Citizenship
Sloam (2011)	'Rejuvenating Politics? Youth, Citizenship and Politics in the United States and Europe'	CivED; CSES; ICCS	Politics
European Commission (2013)	Flash Eurobarometer 375: European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life	EB	Democracy
Kirbiš (2013)	Political Participation and Non-democratic Political Culture in Western Europe, East-Central Europe and Post-Yugoslav Countries	EVS; WVS	Politics
Schwarzer and Connor (2013)	Political Engagement Among the Youth: Effects of Political Socialization Across Europe	ICCS	Politics
Sloam (2013)	The 'Outraged Young': How Young Europeans are Reshaping the Political Landscape	ESS	Politics
Cammaerts et al. (2014)	The Myth of Youth Apathy	YPiDL	Democracy
García-Albacete (2014)	Young people`s political participation in Western Europe	ESS	Participation
Keating (2014)	Education for Citizenship in Europe	ICCS	Citizenship
Mirazchiyski et al. (2014)	Youth Future Civic Participation in Europe: Differences Between the East and the Rest	ICCS	Participation
Sloam (2014a)	'The outraged young': young Europeans, civic engagement and the new media in a time of crisis	ESS	Engagement
Sloam (2014b)	New Voice, Less Equal	CSES; EVS; WVS	Politics

Author and Year	Title	Database	Topic
Brunton-Smith and Barrett (2015)	Political and civic Participation	ESS; ISSP	Participation
Elchardus & Siongers (2015)	The often-announced decline of the modern citizen	ICCS	Engagement
European Commission (2015)	Flash Eurobarometer 408	EB	Participation
Goswami (2015)	Socio-demographic factors and participation of the European youth: A multilevel analysis	MYPLACE	Participation
Hoskins et al. (2015)	Civic Competence of Youth in Europe: Measuring Cross National Variation Through the Creation of a Composite Indicator	ICCS	Citizenship
Klandermans (2015)	Demonstrating youth: a comparison of younger and older demonstrators	CCC	Politics
Mieriņa and Koroļeva (2015)	Support for Far Right Ideology and Anti-Migrant Attitudes among Youth in Europe: A Comparative Analysis	MYPLACE	Politics
Pereira et al. (2015)	Young and Gapped? Political Knowledge of Girls and Boys in Europe	ICCS	Politics
Pilkington & Pollock (2015)	'Politics are Bollocks': Youth, Politics and Activism in Contemporary Europe	MYPLACE	Politics
Pollock et al. (2015)	Populism, Ideology and Contradiction: Mapping Young People's Political Views	MYPLACE	Politics
Soler-i-Martí and Ferrer-Fons (2015)	Youth Participation in Context: the Impact of Youth Transition Regimes on Political Action Strategies in Europe	MYPLACE	Participation
Torney-Purta & Amadeo (2015)	Cross-national political and civic engagement research on european adolescents and young adults	CivED	Citizenship
Cammaerts et al. (2016)	Youth participation in democratic life	ESS	Participation
Monticelli & Bassoli (2016)	Precarious Voices? Types of "Political Citizens" and Repertoires of Action among European Youth	YOUNEX	Politics
Schulz et al. (2016)	IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 Assessment Framework	ICCS	Methodology
Sloam (2016)	Diversity and voice: The political participation of young people in the European Union	ESS	Participation
Briggs (2017)	Young People and Participation in Europe	ESS	Participation
Gozzo & Sampugnaro (2017)	What Matters? Changes in European Youth Participation	EVS	Participation
Mazzoni et al. (2017)	Cross-border mobility, European identity and participation among European adolescents and young adults	CATCH-EyoU	Participation
Oross & Szabó (2017)	Changing Tendencies of Youth Political Participation in Europe	ESS	Participation
Reeskens & Vandecasteele (2017)	Hard times and European youth. The effect of economic insecurity on human values, social attitudes and well-being	ESS	Citizenship
Sloam (2017)	Youth political participation in Europe	ESS	Politics
Strohmeier et al. (2017)	Young People's Engagement With the European Union	Europe 2038	Engagement
Bárta et al. (2018)	Long-term effects of Erasumus+: Youth in Action	RAY	Citizenship
Behrens & Rohlfing (2018)	Not so different in present attitudes and behaviour, but expected future membership	YPMP	Democracy
Diaz-Chorne et al. (2018)	It's the taking part that counts: Inequalities and simultaneous youth transnational engagement from six European countries	MOVE	Engagement
Grasso (2018)	Young People's Political Participation in Europe in Times of Crisis	EB	Participation

Author and Year	Title	Database	Topic
Kovacic & Dolenec (2018)	Youth Participation in Eastern Europe in the Age of Austerity	ISSP, EB	Participation
Losito et al. (2018)	Young People's Perceptions of Europe in a Time of Change	ICCS	Citizenship
Merlă (2018)	Political Participation Amongst the Young in the European Union	LIVEWHAT	Participation
Schnaudt & Weinhardt (2018)	Blaming the Young Misses the Point	ESS	Participation
Šerek & Jugert (2018)	Young European citizens: An individual by context perspective on adolescent European citizenship	ICCS	Citizenship
Blaskó et al. (2019)	Non-cognitive civic outcomes: How can education contribute? European evidence from the ICCS 2016 study	ICCS	Citizenship
Chevalier (2019)	Political trust, young people and institutions in Europe. A multilevel analysis	ESS	Politics
Dahl et al. (2019)	Apathy or alienation? Political passivity among youths across eight European Union countries	CATCH-EyoU	Politics
Enchikova et al. (2019)	Civic and Political Participation of European Youth	CATCH-EyoU	Participation
Friedrich & Nitsch (2019)	Celebrity Political Endorsement and Young Voters in Europe	Other Survey	Politics
Hochman & García-Albacete (2019)	Political Interest among European Youth with and without an Immigrant Background	CILS4EU	Politics
Landberg et al. (2019)	Being both - A European and a national citizen?	CATCH-EyoU	Citizenship
Strohmeier et al. (2019)	Predictors of young people's engagement with the European Union	Europe 2038	Engagement
Tatar & Apateanu (2019)	Multiple Exclusions: Civic and Political Disengagement of Vulnerable Youth in the European Union	EB	Politics
Zilinsky (2019)	Democratic deconsolidation revisited: Young Europeans are not dissatisfied with democracy	ESS	Democracy
Kitanova (2020)	Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis	EB	Participation
Loukakis & Portos (2020)	Another Brick in the Wall? Young people, Protest and Nonprotest Claims Making in Nine European Countries	EURYKA	Participation
Enchikova et al. (2021)	Active Citizenship: Participatory Patterns of European Youth	CATCH-EyoU	Citizenship
Gonzálvez-Gallego & Nieto-Torrejón (2021)	Can open data increase younger generations' trust in democratic institutions? A study in the European Union	ESS	Democracy
Grasso & Giugni (2021)	Intra-generational inequalities in young people political participation in Europe: The impact of social class on youth political engagement	EURYKA	Participation
Grasso & Smith (2021)	Gender inequalities in political participation and political engagement among young people in Europe	EURYKA	Participation
Kucaba & Gkinopoulos (2021)	Individual and Collective Values as Predictors of (Un)Conventional Political Activism	ESS	Politics
Quaranta et al. (2021)	Trust, Satisfaction and Political Engagement during Economic Crisis: Young Citizens in Southern Europe	ESS	Politics
Sloam et al. (2021)	Voice, equality and education: the role of higher education in defining the political participation of young Europeans	ESS	Participation
Zarifis (2021)	Active Citizenship Programmes for Unemployed Young Adults with Low Skills in Southern Europe: Participation, Outreach, and Barriers	EB	Participation