Pivo+

Youth Promoting Informed Vote

VI

TOOL TO ANALYSE POLITICAL CANDIDATES PROGRAMMES

USER GUIDE DEDICATED TO YOUTH, NGOs, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Impressum

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Table Of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 PIVOT Project Summary

The PIVOT Project - Youth Promoting Informed Vote, is an Erasmus+ initiative funded by the European Union dedicated to empowering young people across Europe to be more engaged in democratic life.

Through the creation of a partnership, PIVOT brings together four partner organizations from France, Italy, Albania, and Spain. Each partner—Femmes Entraide et Autonomie (FEA), CESIE, People in Focus (PIF), and Save a Girl Save a Generation (SAG-SAG)—each with their own expertise in European projects, including youth engagement, social inclusion, and advocacy for social and civic participation. They have come together to work on increasing youth involvement in the EU Parliament Elections and spark greater interest in European policies. This goal can be achieved through the implementation of a series of trainings, workshops, online seminars, and specific publications. The project supports EU strategies on youth participation and gender equality. It aligns with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the EU Gender Equality Strategy, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, and the Council of Europe's recommendations on youth participation.

The project's primary focus is to develop young people's critical thinking and evaluative skills, particularly in analyzing political programmes. This aim is essential in fostering a generation of informed voters capable of making decisions based on criteria that reflect their values and social concerns.

The project's main objectives are:

1 Empowering youth through workshops on the EU, social issues, and soft skills.

2 Engaging youth with MEP candidates and policymakers by co-creating a tool to assess political programmes on their needs and perspectives.

3 Promoting best practices in youth participation and active citizenship through communication and outreach activities.

PIVOT is focused on key themes such as gender equality, migration, and climate change. Besides empowering youth through a variety of activities, including training sessions, and workshops, it aims for the development of a comprehensive Evaluation Grid that is applicable to EU, national, and local elections.

The project timeline includes multiple phases:

Development of training modules focused on European Union and social issues, such as gender equality, migration, and climate change.

Youth workshops that use these modules to inform, and promote critical thinking and push towards active citizenship.

Implementation of the Evaluation Grid, allowing youth to apply learned skills to evaluate political candidates and programmes, useful when giving their vote.

The implementation of several workshops focused on improving soft skills.

Through these stages, PIVOT aims to positively impact youth civic engagement, encouraging them to become active participants in their communities and also providing them with tools to evaluate political programmes critically.

1.2 User guide

The purpose of this User Guide is to support users in understanding and applying one of the PIVOT project's core tools—the Evaluation Grid. The Evaluation Grid was created by young people participating in the PIVOT project as a structured tool to help other young people evaluate political candidates' programmes in a critical way.

Youth from Albania, France, Italy, and Spain were focused on defining propositions on topics such as gender equality, migration, and climate change as the most relevant to them. Through this tool, young people can focus on important values that correspond with their beliefs and analyze candidates' policies based on clear, structured criteria.

This guide provides detailed instructions on how to use the Evaluation Grid in local, national, and European elections, enabling users to adapt the grid to different political contexts. By following the guide, users can make it easier for themselves to evaluate political rhetoric that affects their daily lives and thus be able to advocate for policies that align with their values. The Evaluation Grid ultimately aims to empower young people with a sense of security in voting in democratic processes and a better understanding of how policy can impact critical social issues. This tool can help them realize the importance of electing candidates who are committed to building a more inclusive society and who resonate with their principles.

2. YOUTH POWER

Youth are crucial drivers of change, playing an important role in shaping decision-making processes. They are the most impacted group in society by decisions made by political leaders, often elected by themselves. This makes it significant for young people to take the lead, advocating for their beliefs and addressing their needs for their and the community's bright future. By influencing political party representatives, initiating actions, and actively pushing for clear policies, they have the legitimate right as active citizens. Youth is the voice to hold accountable policymakers, transforming the discourse and putting in the center of attention youth frame of reference.

Raise voice for policy change

Young people have the energy, vitality, and power to raise their voices for their concerns and capture the attention of political leaders. It brings support for policy change and development.

Approach genuine concern

A better future starts with highlighting the concerns and needs in a genuine and reflective way. Youth should volunteer to be involved in political processes to have their say in policymaking.

Provide generation insights

Youth can provide important insight about their generation. Involving youth in decision-making processes ensures the design of effective, specific policies.

Trigger innovation

Often adults think and act in a certain manner, somehow limited. Young people may invoke new, novel, original ideas to address policymakers.

Mobilize their peers

Youth have the ability to mobilize their peers in youth-led actions and to be actively involved in the political arena. Youth participation is necessary for the development of active citizenship because it balances young people's social rights with their responsibilities.

Empower local community

Take an active role in creating a more empowered, inclusive, and strong community. Youth participation is crucial for cultivating active communities that are informed and responsible about their duties as citizens.

3. Lundy's Model of Youth Participation

The Lundy model[1] of participation can be used to understand what is needed for young people's involvement in decision-making to take place. There are four elements to the model. They each describe the different components that are required for youth participation to occur and emphasize the importance of listening to young people's views.

[1]Lundy's Model of Participation has been adapted specifically for this user guide: *The Lundy model of child participation* (n.d.) Available in: *https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/lundy_model_of_participation_0.pdf*

The Lundy model of participation

Young people safe, inclusive opportunities to support their active involvement

Young people right to express their views and opinions must be valued and encouraged.

Space

Voice

Influence

Audience

Young people´s ideas must be taken seriusly and acted upon, where appropriate.

Young people's views must be communicated to political leaders to make them accountable and responsible.

These four elements can be described as:

SPACE

political parties need to create inclusive, safe spaces and consultation meetings for young people to actively participate in their programmes.

AUDIENCE

political candidates have to commit to listening and take into account young people's approaches on selected topics. A mechanism should be developed that ensures that all views are listened to by someone with responsibility.
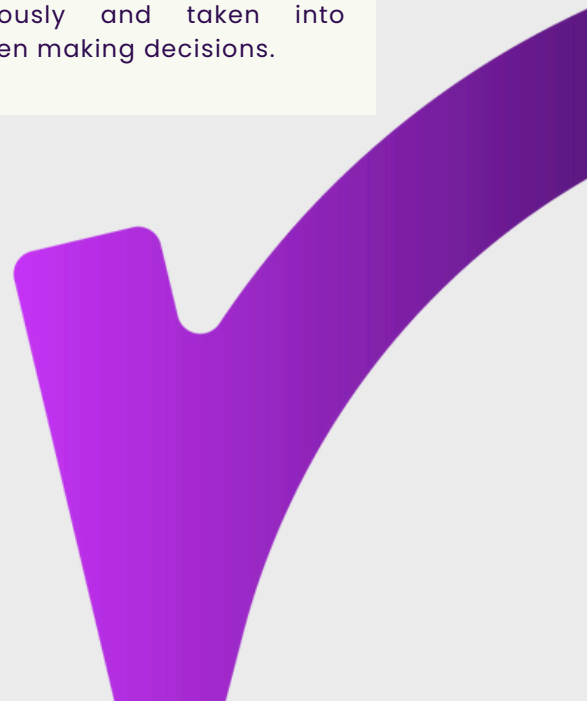
VOICE

Young people have to freely express their opinions and ideas on the political candidate's programme. If they want to do so. Their opinions should be valued and encouraged.

INFLUENCE

the ideas that young people share should have influence and impact on the political candidates' programme. Young people's views should be taken seriously and taken into account when making decisions.

4. Overview of the Evaluation Grid

4.1. How the Evaluation Grid was developed

Identifying need

The Evaluation Grid is a core component of the PIVOT Project, designed to equip young people with a structured, organized tool for analyzing and comparing political candidates' programmes. This tool is based on objective criteria that can help youth make informed choices based on well-defined propositions rather than general views.

Developing process

After three training sessions in each partner country aiming to increase youth capacities on topics such as gender equality, migration, and climate change, young people from Albania, France, Italy, and Spain came together in dynamic, interactive discussions about elections and how to influence political candidate programmes.

After brainstorming among them, and exchanging information and views, they concluded on specific propositions to take into account in the areas of gender equality, migration, and climate change when assessing political programmes. They evaluated that the propositions are important to ensure that human rights are met and ensure alignment with European values.

By focusing on critical social themes, the Evaluation Grid enables young voters to evaluate if candidates' policies align with the important matters for their lives, their peers, and their local communities.

The Evaluation Grid's primary function is to allow youth to evaluate political programmes in a structured way. It provides predefined criteria across key areas, helping young people to objectively put in balance a candidate's position. By using the Evaluation Grid, young people become more engaged in the electoral process, fostering critical thinking skills and empowering them to hold political candidates accountable.

The Evaluation Grid contains three main criteria areas, including specific indicators that young people can use to assess the relevance, strength, and feasibility of a candidate's policy proposals.

Young people highlighted the below propositions for an equitable, just, and sustainable world. Their vision for the future is closely connected with these statements when assessing political candidates.

They strongly believe that the political candidates should seriously consider their views and put in practice their ideas in order to have progression and a better environment for everyone. Moreover, they believe that their peers will benefit from articulating their thoughts and take the initiative to hold accountable political candidates and policymakers.

Young people may evaluate each proposition given below for each party program based on the scale system, like:

- **Very satisfactory**
- **Rather satisfactory**
- **Rather unsatisfactory**
- **Very unsatisfactory**
- **Not mentioned**

Based on the assessment given for each party, it will be easier for youth to vote for the party that fulfills their criteria and to raise their voice when these criteria aren't met on the programmes.

Let's evaluate the programmes of the candidates in the European elections!

✔	Propositions	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4	Party 5	Party 6	Party 7	Party 8
Gender equality	Harmonising European legislation on gender equality and gender-based violence								
	Developing a Europe-wide policy for information and education on gender equality.								
	Promoting and protecting effective access to sexual health and abortion throughout the EU								
	Protecting LGBT people and their rights								
Migration	Placing people at the centre of European migration policies.								
	Implementing a migrant redistribution reform, to better distribute migrants in the EU member States								
	Implementing measures to raise society's awareness of the migration issue.								
Climate change	Adopt clear, binding legislation at European level, for an ambitious, long-term policy								
	Rethinking our use of energy								
	Protecting biodiversity and the environment at EU level								
	Promoting the use of soft mobility.								

● Very satisfactory   ● Rather satisfactory   ● Rather unsatisfactory   ● Very unsatisfactory   ? Not mentioned

4.2.1 Common Criteria for Gender Equality

These are the criteria evaluated as **very important** taken into account by young people.

Harmonising European legislation on gender equality and gender-based violence

Why this criteria? - Legislative frameworks in the different EU and non-EU countries like Albania differ broadly in the fields of gender equality. As a country that adheres to becoming an EU member state, it should align with EU democratic values. **It is necessary to guarantee the same protections to all, regardless of their nationality.** All people should benefit from equality in the workplace, equal opportunities, and equal pay, with an intersectional perspective on the ways that the wage gap is affecting lower salaries. **Moreover, parental leave should be equal regardless of gender**, as maternal leave is one of the main sources of the gender pay gap, and harmonised at European level.

The laws also differ when it comes to gender-based and sexual violence and rape. As a result, victims are protected differently, depending on their country of origin. **It is necessary to adopt common definitions of gender-based and sexual violence.** The definitions of the most protective EU Member States in terms of SGBV[2] should be adopted in a common way, for better protection of victims at European level.

To make sure that these legislations are implemented efficiently, this plan should be monitored at all stages, through questionnaires and surveys, for more transparency.

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[2] UNHCR Türkiye (n.d.)Sexual and gender-based violence. UNHCR Türkiye. Available at: https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/social-economic-and-civil-matters/sexual-and-gender-based-violence/

Developing a Europe-wide policy for information and education on gender equality.

Why this criteria? - Citizens are not sufficiently informed about gender equality issues, and in particular about sexual and reproductive health and rights, contraception, consent, desire, menstruation, etc. **Institutions must ensure that citizens are better informed about these issues. The information provided must not be limited to a heterosexual, cisgender, binary view of gender, but must include all genders and sexual orientations.**

In addition, as part of the same goal to provide citizens with comprehensive information, **we need to combat misinformation and discriminatory comments about women and gender minorities online, by better controlling the algorithms and content posted online.** A policy similar to that of the Digital Services Act could be put in place, which aims in particular to remove illegal content reported online more quickly.

Promoting and protecting effective access to sexual health and abortion throughout the EU

Why this criteria? - National legislation and policies in the different Member States of the European Union and non-EU states offer citizens different levels of access to sexual health services and to voluntary termination of pregnancy. **Access to sexual health services, and in particular access to abortion, should be effective throughout the European Union and Albania.** Countries must ensure equal access to abortion rights across their entire territory, and abolish the conscience clause.

To ensure effective access for all, the national institutions must invest financial resources in dedicated public and voluntary structures: hospitals, sexual health centres, such as family planning clinics, etc.

Protecting LGBT people and their rights

Why this criteria? - Policies regarding the protection of LGBT people differ greatly according to the Member State. In Albania, France, Spain or Italy LGBT people have many issues when it comes to the protection of their rights. **In order to properly protect their rights, laws at European and national levels should be harmonised, including banning discrimination in the hiring process based on gender identity or sexual orientation.** Broad sensitisation and information campaigns should be put in place in this regard, as well as legislative frameworks.

Current public policies in the EU on gender often adopt a traditional "binary" view of gender: they are often limited to protecting women's rights and fighting for equality between women and men, without taking into account the discrimination suffered by transgender people, non-binary people and people of different genders.

Just as the objective of gender equality has been included in **all European policies through gender mainstreaming, all policies that aim to fight for gender equality should include policies to promote the equality of cisgender and transgender people and to protect the rights of transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Albania has to follow the European path regarding the policies.**

4.2.2. Common Criteria for Migration

These are the criteria evaluated as **very important** taken into account by young people.

Regarding reception conditions, they must be harmonised across the European Union and beyond to allow for a better relocation of migrants. The EU should create a detailed programme to financially allow for equal financial support for all migrants, regardless of the country they live in. It should be stated what percentage will go to basic needs. Public policies must allow for a mix between migrants and the general population, in order to promote integration and avoid the ghettoization of migrants. **The countries on the border of Europe such as Albania, which receive the most new arrivals who have taken the Mediterranean route, must be better financially supported,** in order to improve the reception conditions for migrants in these countries. **Refugee detention centers should be eliminated,** as they do not respect the standards for a life in dignity. **European legislation on the reception of migrants must be better applied, and financial resources must be allocated.** This could involve the creation of a European agency in charge of welcoming migrants, which would ensure that reception standards in Europe are met. Furthermore, migrants must also be covered by the principle of non-discrimination, and be protected in the same way whatever their origin. Special attention should be paid to the fight against human trafficking in destination countries. Migrants should receive a booklet or info pack where they can get information about their rights and their opportunities, in their mother language. Regarding administrative procedures, they can be very cumbersome and difficult for applicants who have little knowledge of the administrative system, languages, and European cultures. **It is essential to simplify procedures, to facilitate them, and to take into account the obstacles encountered by migrants.** Also, the procedure for obtaining the status of unaccompanied minors is today too complex: it must be made easier, in order to allow the protection of these particularly vulnerable minors.

Nowadays, numerous plans are put in place by institutions regarding the reception and treatment of people in migration situations. However, many of them cannot vote because they do not yet have the host country's nationality. **Yet, it is necessary to create spaces to allow people in migration situations to express themselves, and to involve them in legislative and decision-making processes.**

In cases of returns, a specific institution should be created for migrants who return to their countries, in order to keep track of statistics and give recommendations on how migrants can restart their lives.

Faced with the rise of climate change which is leading many people to temporarily or permanently leave their places of life, **the status of climate refugee should be created, in order to adequately protect those who flee their countries due to the consequences of climate change.**

Finally, the most vulnerable people, such as women, LGBTQ+ people, children, and people who have physical or mental health problems, must be better supported, through comprehensive political plans.

Implementing a migrant relocation reform, to better relocate migrants in the EU Member States

Why this criteria? - The countries at the borders of Europe receive the most people who cross the Mediterranean route. They are currently unable to manage all the asylum requests they receive. Yet, according to the Dublin regulations[3], the first Member State where the fingerprints and personal information of an asylum seeker are registered is often the Member State responsible for the asylum request. **In order to ensure procedures that are effective, safe, and respecting human dignity, migrants and asylum seekers should be better distributed among Member States.**[4]

Implementing measures to raise society's awareness of the migration issue.

Why this criteria? - Many citizens are little or poorly informed about the migration issue. Also, false information circulates, which can contribute to the production of stereotypes and even hate speech. **A policy of raising awareness among European and Albanian citizens on subjects surrounding migration, by giving a voice to the people concerned,** seems essential to us, in order to ensure living together.

[3] European Comission (2020). *Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin Regulation)*. European Comission: Migration and Home Affairs. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application-dublin-regulation_en

[4] Ídem

Adopt clear, binding legislation at European level, for an ambitious, long-term policy

Why this criteria? – Climate change is an urgent problem, and decisions must be made today to mitigate its most devastating consequences. **European policies on climate change cannot be confined to "small steps": it is a large-scale change in our capitalist and Western way of living and consumption that our society must make.** For example, it is appropriate to favour short circuits over imports that are costly for the environment and to adopt a policy of environmental protectionism.

European and Albanian regulations must be more restrictive if we want to achieve the Paris Agreement objective of limiting global warming to a level well below 2°C by the end of the 21st century. Legal or moral persons that create a negative impact on the environment should be sanctioned, and companies should be obligated to avoid harming the environment: **different levels of sanctions should be defined to obligate companies to adopt equal plans to protect the environment. The measures must also be better harmonised at a European level.** For example, Article 37 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union concerning the protection of the environment and the improvement of its quality should be modified, in order to make it less incomplete. The European Union must adopt a truly ambitious policy on climate change. A new environmental treaty could be considered, encouraging all states to sign it, particularly the most polluting ones.

If they do not respect the recommended measures or do not achieve the objectives set, the Member States concerned should be condemned at European level, in the same way as Switzerland.

The ecological transition cannot take place without thinking about the impact of climate change and climate change mitigation policies on populations. **People who are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change (women, migrants, etc.) must therefore be protected by States.** The right to health must be guaranteed for all, and particularly the most vulnerable. **European policy must be based on the needs of the populations.** Thus, the policies implemented will be more accepted and fairer. More broadly, the transition requires a better redistribution of wealth and the reduction of inequalities. The transition must also be made through awareness, from a very young age. Society as a whole must be encouraged to change its practices and adopt alternatives to the most polluting behaviours. More generally, citizens' ability to act must be encouraged.

Furthermore, the ecological transition must be political: the European Union must be able to condemn injustices and attacks on human rights linked to climate change, as well as climate sceptic speeches.

4.2.3. Common Criteria for Climate Change

These are the criteria evaluated as **very important** taken into account by young people.

Rethinking our use of energy

Why this criteria? – Our energy production, and in particular the combustion of fossil fuels, is today the origin of a large part of greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for global warming. **The European Union must act concretely, and release funds to promote and subsidise renewable energies, to make them accessible to all. Conversely, we must rethink our relationship with nuclear power and fossil fuels, to promote green energies.**

Certain areas, notably overseas, are particularly affected by the effects of climate change. Therefore, it is appropriate to strengthen the financing of renewable energies in these areas, to promote the transition.

Pivot

Protecting biodiversity and the environment at EU level

Why this criteria? - The EU should implement programmes to promote reforestation in some areas and make it obligatory that each territory implements a certain amount of green areas. Albanians should adapt to European policies. Biodiversity corridors, that allow animals to travel from one patch of forest to another, should also be encouraged. As for construction, it should be avoided to build near tourist areas, and construction should only be permitted when extensive research is done that shows how it can be beneficial to the area.

Promoting the use of soft mobility.

Why this criteria? - As part of a transition towards more environmentally friendly behaviour, soft mobility must be encouraged. This involves internalising the costs on the environment and pollution, by regulating national flights or by taxing national flights for example, and by creating dedicated aid to favour train travel, so that travelling by train is always cheaper than travelling by plane over the same distance. At the local level, facilities in cities should be created to improve access and circulation by bicycle.

Understanding political candidates' programs may be challenging and overwhelming, that's why the Evaluation Grid makes it easier to compare parties based on what really matters to young people. This tool helps youth to analyse policies, fact-check declarations given by candidates and make informed decisions when elections are held.

4.3. What steps are needed to use the Evaluation Grid?

To fully use the Evaluation Grid and assess each party, young people should follow these steps:

- **Undertake Research on Political Candidates Programmes:** Gather information from multiple reliable sources, including official campaign websites, interviews, debates, news reports, and fact-checking platforms. It is important to understand better beyond the slogans and the rhetoric they use.

- **Asses Policies Objectively:** Use the Evaluation Grid to assess each candidate based on clear, predefined criteria. Focus on the feasibility and impact of their proposals rather than vague promises. Assign upon the scale system accordingly.

- **Check Consistency and Accountability:** Analyze if candidates have a track record of supporting the policies they advocate. Review their actions to ensure their promises align with the commitments undertaken.

- **Compare and Prioritize Issues:** Put in balance the real values and give priority to the selected issues. Consider the long-term impact of their policies and how effectively they address the concerns and needs of young people. Identify which candidates best represent your interests.

- **Engage in Critical Discussion:** Discuss your findings with peers, mentors, and community members. Debating different viewpoints can broaden your perspective and improve your evaluation to make a decision.

- **Fulfill your role as active citizens:** Young people's opinions should be heard. You may take part in candidates' meetings with citizens, and media debates to make sure that you share your views and analysis, conducted through the evaluation grid.

- **Stay Updated:** Political candidates may change or adjust their programs throughout the campaign. Make sure to track their updates and new developments to ensure an informed vote.

4.4. How the Evaluation Grid was developed

By following these steps, users can make the most of the Evaluation Grid, converting complex political choices into structured, objective analysis.

The Evaluation Grid is tailored to be flexible, making it a useful tool across different types of elections, including local, national, and European elections. Each election type may require to add or remove the criteria, depending on the type of elections. The Evaluation Grid remains valuable referring to any elections regardless of the geographical scale of the election. It helps to reflect on the priorities that youth find adequate and vital for a better future.

Depending on the elections, the Evaluation Grid can assess:

Local Elections: Prioritizing Community Issues

Local elections are typically focused on issues that directly affect the daily lives of local communities within a specific geographic area, such as a town, city, or municipality. It is important to evaluate candidates on their ability to address the needs of that community and turn their promises into actions.

For instance, in a local election, youth have to focus on topics like climate change that are relevant the specific area. This could include soft mobility, investment renewable energy resources, recycling programmes etc.

Moreover, for a community with issues such as integration of migrants and inclusion has to address discrimination and foster a multicultural society. The Evaluation Grid for local elections keeps track of the policies candidates propose to be relevant and actionable within the local context.

National Elections: Broader Concerns

At the national level, the topics addressed have a broader perspective that includes the entire country. In recent years, one of the most significant areas for national elections is climate policy. Voters may seek candidates who have strong and practical plans for addressing national environmental challenges, such as reducing carbon emissions, transitioning to renewable energy sources, and implementing green technologies. The Evaluation Grid can be used to compare candidates' positions on these national climate policies and identify whose proposals align with their vision for the country.

Gender equality initiatives may include, for example, improving access to sexual healthcare, ensuring LGBT rights are taken into consideration, or ensuring equal representation in leadership roles across various sectors. The Evaluation Grid can be adapted to include specific criteria related to their countries' policies, allowing voters to evaluate candidates' proposals on how to manage the national economy, reduce inequality, and combat climate change.

European Elections: International Cooperation and Global Challenges

European elections offer an entirely different scope for young people to consider, as these elections are concerned with addressing collective concerns within the European Union. The key areas of focus in European elections often include EU-wide policies on climate change, migration, and human rights. These elections provide a platform for voters to choose candidates who will represent their interests at the European level and contribute to shaping the direction of the EU.

The EU is facing ongoing challenges related to migration and the evaluation grid will help to assess how this issue will be prioritised and managed by EU leaders ensuring fair policies. Furthermore, the EU has targeted climate actions and taken actions to reduce CO2 with clear, ambitious commitments through defined policies. Young people have to notice how the candidates align with EU goals and global agreements.

Similarly, issues such as gender equality, LGBT rights, and the healthcare system are important topics in European elections. In this context, the Evaluation Grid becomes an essential tool for European youth who need to evaluate candidates 'commitment to shared EU values, as well as their ability to navigate complex, cross-national issues that require cooperation and collaboration across the EU member states.

5. What's great about the Evaluation Grid?

The Evaluation Grid is an essential tool within the PIVOT project, serving as a structured framework for monitoring and evaluating political candidates' programmes. Its design allows young people to critically assess how each candidate's policies align with their values and expectations for social issues such as gender equality, migration, and climate change. Using the Evaluation Grid encourages objective, evidence-based voting decisions, moving away from purely emotional or superficial influences. This fosters a more informed and active electorate, especially among young voters, who are often underserved in political education and civic participation resources.

The Evaluation Grid is structured to promote critical thinking by helping users analyze candidates' commitments against specific, measurable indicators. This approach helps youth distinguish between vague promises and actionable policies, guiding young people to focus on candidates' real commitments rather than campaign rhetoric.

Youth Participation

Youth participation is essential in elections. It supports the human rights of young people, contributes to democratic life, and evaluates decision-making processes. Youth participation can be defined as "young people having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities, so as to contribute to building a better society".[5]

[5] Council of Europe & The Congress (2015).Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. Council of Europe. Available at: https://rm.coe.int/168071b4d6

Promoting Active Citizenship

The Evaluation Grid serves as more than an election tool; it is also a catalyst for active citizenship. By engaging youth in the evaluation process, the grid fosters a sense of responsibility and ownership over the democratic process. This empowerment helps build a new generation of voters who are not only informed but are also proactive in shaping the envision of the future. Encouraging youth to give voice to their concerns and align with candidates who share their values, helping them feel that their vote is a meaningful form of activism.

Through its emphasis on inclusive values and structured evaluation, the Evaluation Grid ultimately contributes to strengthening democratic principles and reinforcing the role of young people as active, valued participants in their societies. By focusing on critical social issues and equipping youth with analytical tools, the Evaluation Grid supports the development of a more engaged, informed, and resilient youth.

Engagement of citizen journalists

Evaluating candidates' programmes through the Evaluation Grid may create a sense of community in youth and engage citizen journalists through the elections. Young people may become active in the political dialogue. They may share their views and opinions on political candidates' programmes and disseminate the information in many forms such as writing on their social media, writing articles in media student outlets, creating informative videos, raising concerns through facts, etc. This allows them to not only make decisions for themselves but also share their insights and evaluations with others. In doing so, they take on the role of citizen journalists, contributing to public debates by offering new perspectives and making candidates accountable and responsible for their platforms.

Creating Future Leaders

Using tools like the Evaluation Grid to evaluate candidates' programmes enhances critical thinking, media literacy, and political awareness among youth. These are essentials for creating future leaders who are not only informed about political issues but are also capable of engaging others in informed dialogue. As they develop these skills, youth may take leadership roles in their communities, taking roles as active citizens, advocate for different policies and organize their peers in meaningful actions.

6. Implementation of the Evaluation Grid in Past Elections

Application and Impact

The Evaluation Grid was introduced in the previous European election as a pilot tool for empowering young participants of the PIVOT project to critically assess candidates and engage more actively in democratic processes. Young people from France, Italy, and Spain used the Evaluation Grid to evaluate candidates running for the European Parliament. Young People from Albania will have the chance to use the grid in the upcoming 2025 Albanian Parliamentary elections. This real-world application provided valuable insights into the tool's effectiveness, demonstrating its capacity to foster a deeper understanding of political programmes among youth participants.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Implementing the Evaluation Grid also presented several challenges that offered valuable lessons for future applications. One challenge was collecting accurate, up-to-date information on candidates' policies, particularly on nuanced topics like climate change and migration. To address this, the PIVOT Project team encouraged participants to use multiple sources, including official campaign websites, interviews, news articles, and public debates. This approach taught youth how to discern reliable information, an essential skill for responsible citizenship.

Another challenge was adapting the grid to each country's unique political context. For instance, issues prioritized by youth in one country might differ from those in another, requiring flexibility in applying the Evaluation Grid's criteria. The experience highlighted the importance of customizing the grid based on local needs while retaining its core principles. This adaptability is a crucial lesson for future implementations, as it ensures the grid remains relevant across diverse political landscapes.

7. Conclusions

The **PIVOT Project** has demonstrated that tools like the **Evaluation Grid** can help young people get more involved in democracy and think critically about their choices. Through open discussions with political candidates, media debates, and online research, young participants from different backgrounds will be able to assess their programmes. This experience will help them understand important issues, such as **gender equality, migration,** and **climate change.**

The Evaluation Grid gives a **clear** and **practical** way to break down these complex issues, making it easier to make informed voting decisions.

The project highlighted the value of the Evaluation Grid as a tool for **monitoring firstly the EU elections,** by encouraging young people from **France, Italy,** and **Spain** to think critically and fairly about the political choices of **EU leaders**. By evaluating candidates using **specific, measurable** criteria, they moved beyond campaign promises and focused on the candidates' real policy plans. This approach not only helped them make stronger decisions but also showed that youth have an important role to play in **democratic discussions.**

The evaluation grid is a **valuable resource** that will be used not only in **European elections** but even in **national elections** in **Albania** and EU member states and local ones as well. The Evaluation Grid can boost democratic participation and encourage long-term accountability from political candidates. By learning to evaluate policies critically and **work together on common goals**, young people are better equipped to help **create a more inclusive society**. As the project continues to develop and grow, the Evaluation Grid is a great resource to **empower youth** and encourage them to take **informed youth-led actions** in different political settings.

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