

## **What does young people engagement in Norway mean for the decision making in the country?**

**The essence of the text and a little food for thought while reading the text captured in one sentence:**

*“Ungdom er fremtiden, la oss ta del i å forme den” – Jens H. Andersen*

*Translation:*

*“Youths are the future, let us take part in shaping it”*

The politics in Norway are in many ways influenced by the Norwegian youth on both micro-, middle- and macro-level. At the schools as well as in national politics, the youths always get to speak their mind when something that will affect them is decided. The schools have their own “pupil councils”, which are required by Norwegian law, most municipalities and counties have “youth councils”, and there’re also youth parties from every big political party as well as unbiased one-cause youth organizations on a macro-level.

### **The principle of participation:**

In Norway all the work concerning youths must take youths’ voice into consideration. If a new school is built, there’s always a planning group where youths gets their say in how the new school should look and work. If a new bill is proposed, youth organizations will always have their say before the bill can be passed. Norway is built upon this principle of participation and the principle is based on the thought that everyone should get their say even though they are not able to vote yet. This principle is what makes the youth stand up for what they believe is right and try to change the world for the better for the generation that comes after.

### **Youth parties and mother parties:**

Perhaps the most visible way the Norwegian youth participates in the democracy is through the youth parties which are all tied to their mother party through ideology and shared representatives. The youth- and mother-parties have a strong connection and often the youth influence the mother party to the youths’ advantage.

The youth parties work as youth counterparts to the mother party and they’re always challenging the mother parties to see the world from another perspective. The youth parties are often more innovative and radical than their mother parties and youth parties are also very often the ones who push for bills to be passed and for the mother parties to go back to their core values if they are sliding away from them.

Since the youth parties have a high exchange of their members they always have new input and ideas on how to solve the problems we face in modern society. The creativity makes the youth parties into gold mines for older politicians who might lack the innovative mind that they need to take their country forwards into the future.

### **One-cause groups:**

In all countries there are one-cause groups that are fighting for what they believe in and in Norway, some of these organizations are “youths only”-organizations. Two of the examples I

want to use is “Natur og Ungdom<sup>1</sup>” which is a youth organization working for the environment and “Elevorganisasjonen<sup>2</sup>” which is the Norwegian student union. What they have in common is that they focus on one topic and they influence the politics on their own specific points. The government use these organizations as a voice from the general youth, and even if the youth organization disagrees with the government the politicians will use the voice of the youth to try to compromise with them. This is a good way of involving youth into the political decisions taken nationally. It assures the government that it has the youth perspective and that “the young side” gets their say.

These one-cause groups are also sometimes rebellious and have big protests against the state. This is something not very common, but it may occur occasionally if there’s something the youths find really upsetting.

### **Youth participation and voice in Micro-institutions vs Macro-institutions:**

On a micro-level, like in schools, the pupils’ counsel are the ones who speak for the pupils. The effectiveness of these councils varies from council to council but with an adult who can help organize, the pupils counsel is very often a great success.

While the macro-level institutions like the state has their own state-independent organizations making sure that the youth is heard, the municipalities and counties of Norway has created their own way of giving their young ones a voice. The middle-level institutions have different counsels. The “youth municipality counsel<sup>3</sup>” and “youth county counsel<sup>4</sup>” is a growing phenomenon in Norway and this is a trend that gives the youth in Norway a stronger voice and an actual way of participating in their local politics.

### **The politicians’ resource:**

A lot of the politicians in Norway sees the youth as a resource to get more voters and to get a broader perspective on what they’re fighting for. The view politicians in Norway has, that youth is a resource that should be used, builds strong and creative political force. This force is what drives the very soul of youth participation and what makes new youths get engaged in causes in their local milieu and later in national politics.

There’s a lot of ways in which the Norwegian youths can participate but what is most important is that the youth is in charge themselves and that adults and what’s “realistic” doesn’t get in the way of the young innovative thoughts that’s presented.

### **Ending words:**

The youth of Norway have a lot of good ways of getting their voice heard, and this also reflects back on the democracy we live in. When the youth perspective is taken into consideration, the youth will utter their way of thinking and a new perspective on politics will be taken into the debate, and therefore Norway becomes a richer democracy. When young people are allowed to speak their minds freely, more innovative ideas comes into the light and we see more solutions to modern problems. The hearts and minds of youth was not made for containment and silence, but rather created for exploration and a listening ear.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nu.no/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://elev.no/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://kommunal-rapport.no/video/2018/05/slik-funger-ungdomsradene-landet-rundt>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hordaland.no/nn-NO/politikk/politisk-organisering/ungdommens-fylkesting-og-fylkesutval/>