



It's never too early to take action

JUNIOR ASSOCIATIONS' WHITE PAPER



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Introduction

When you claim the right and freedom of association for underage people, you claim a fundamental right that has been guaranteed for years at the national and international level. However, it is clear that this right is still not fully accessible to those who intend to seize it. **It is urgent and necessary that our society -at all levels and spheres, public and private- respect Children's Human Rights, including the right to participation. This belief is one of our responsibilities to the youths.** It involves every stakeholder in our society to keep on with their mobilization, and thus enable young people to fully participate in the civic life of our country and beyond.

In 2021 (for the 120th anniversary of the law 1901) young people involved in Juniors Associations (JA) worked from all over France and rallied around a common project: Deliber'action. Ten local meetings and an online consultation enabled the RNJA to create this White Paper which provides a non-exhaustive inventory of the right of association for underage people in France. Above all, the collection of testimonies and proposals made it possible to identify several levers. The goal is that children and young people can more easily run their volunteering as they wish, in their neighborhoods, villages, or schools.

Deliber'action is also the free expression of young people who get involved, and who have the will to come together around common claims. While public policies are creative in encouraging (and even urging) young people to volunteer in civic life, it is all the more legitimate for those first concerned to be heard. Underage people involved in Juniors Associations have concrete, ambitious proposals that respect RNJA's founding values: freedom of association, autonomy and taking responsibility. These proposals aim to ensure that their right to volunteer collectively is fully recognised and resolutely encouraged.

As long as French society as a whole is not fully convinced of the legitimate right to create an association whatever its age; the RNJA will continue its action to promote the right of association for underage people and therefore their rightful place in collective spaces.

Board members



Juniors Associations' approach and the national network

In 1998, three public structures propelled the creation of the National Network of Juniors Associations (RNJA): Ligue de l'Enseignement, Groupement d'Intérêt Public Défi Jeunes and J. Presse (editor's note: all of them are popular education networks). The RNJA works to remove the obstacles to the right of association for underage people. It allows them to form an association around an idea, a project, or quite simply a desire to take action. **Juniors Associations (JA) offers an educational approach that respects the autonomy of young people and offers easy access to the tools to run an association** (bank account, insurance, etc.).

Some numbers :

2019: 12,527 members and 1,117 Juniors Associations registered with the RNJA.

2020: 10,114 members and 913 JA registered with the RNJA (while it was a difficult year for volunteering due to the sanitary crisis)

The average age is 16 in 2020 compared to 15 in 2019.

The RNJA association **is made up of the Ligue de l'Enseignement, Jets d'encre (ex-J.Presse), Confederation Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture and the Federation des Centres Sociaux et Socioculturel** (editor's note: all of them are popular education networks). These structures are permanent members and they assume administrative work. They work on an equal basis with underage representatives from the network, who are elected by their peers.

In order to create a Juniors Association, you must be at least two underage people, and you can be as many as you want.. **The project must be directed by the young people and the Juniors Association's governance must be democratic.** A JA can accept young adults between 18 and 20, if they represent less than half of the members and are not their representatives. Adults over 20 cannot be members of a JA. They can however, at the request of the Junior Associations, be accepted as a Local Accompanists (LA).

The RNJA relies on a network of Departmental Relays (representatives of RNJA member structures) and Local Accompanists which are committed to young people. **Since 1998, the Network has supported more than 80,000 young people in carrying out nearly 7,000 projects.**

3 key-dates about young volunteering

1901

The law 1901 defines the right of association in France. It never stipulated that a minimum age was required for the creation of an association. Neither for a participation in the board.

The associative activity of underage people was under the responsibility of their legal representative.

1990

France ratifies the International Convention on Children's Human right, which guarantees the freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (article 15).

2017

In 2017, the "Equality and Citizenship" law (article 43) changes the article 2 of the law 1901.

In the first place, this article affirms the principle that «any minor can freely become member of an association in conditions defined by this law».

It was necessary to redefine it due to persistent confusion on this point, and despite the fact that it does not completely depend on the law but also on associations' status.

Then, two conditions are introduced which identify two procedures according to age: before 16 and after 16.



Right and freedom of association for underage people: where are we ?

Before 16 years old:

«Any underage person under the age of sixteen, subject to the prior written consent of his legal representative, may participate in the constitution of an association and be responsible for its administration under the conditions provided for in article 1990 of the Civil Code. They may also perform, subject to the prior written consent of his legal representative, all acts useful for the association's administration, with the exception of acts of provision.»

After 16 years:

«Any underage person over the age of sixteen may freely participate in the constitution of an association and be responsible for its administration under the conditions provided for in Article 1990 of the Civil Code. The legal representatives of the underage person are informed by the association, under conditions set by decree. Unless expressly opposed by the legal representative, the minor may alone perform all acts useful for the administration of the association, with the exception of acts of provision.»



Chapter 1 - How underage people's volunteering can be recognised

We are far from the portrait of an apathetic and disengaged young people: the youths, driven by their beliefs, take action on their territories and demonstrate a culture of volunteering that is constantly renewed. According to the youth barometer established each year by the National Institute of Youth and Popular Education (INJEP), **since 2018 the participation in associations and the volunteering of young people has continuously increased.**

According to many sociological writings, it is undeniable that volunteering is a lever for democratic participation, a space that promotes living together and it also eases the development of technical, operational and social skills. Yet **the engagement of young people, and more particularly the underage ones, is little considered.** Involved young people are committed and rightful actors of their territory. They are vectors of human and societal dynamics, and they **claim their capacity to take action and demand the recognition of their volunteering, in spaces formal as well as informal.**

«We don't appear trustworthy in the eyes of adults, some say 'no' to us instead of helping to rework projects. You really have to insist and persist in setting up projects.»

- Omar, 16 years old, JA from Gironde

This demand is put forward by all kinds of stakeholders working for youth in their advocacy and actions. In 2015, France Stratégie published "Recognising, promoting and encouraging the engagement of young people", the findings of which echo the experiences of the Juniors Associations. **During the entire structured dialogue process put in place by the RNJA through its Deliber'action project, young people (regardless of their territory or their age) have constantly expressed the need for recognition and trust from adults.** So what can be done to put these findings into action? The Juniors Associations offer you two lines of action.

Associative volunteering is a fundamental right and it is guaranteed by various official legal texts including the Constitution, the European Charter (revised on the participation of young people in local and regional life) and the Convention of the Children's Human Right ratified in 1990 by France.

#1 – Questioning adults posture towards young people

«In society, even just at the table, my age is a barrier to the development of my projects. We are not given room [...] And in our heads we are capable of anything.»

- Alexia, 13 years old, JA from the North

When young people are given a voice, their desire and their capacity to independently take action are undeniable. But their legitimacy, and more particularly the confidence that adults place in them, continue to lack them. **This shortcoming constitutes a considerable obstacle to the success of their actions: in the current societal reality, it is adults who have exclusive rights, in particular technical and administrative. These rights are necessary to conduct projects.**

However, the notion of responsibility for underage people seems ambiguous: for example **in the legal sphere underage people can be held responsible for their actions and the penalties incurred suggest that the law considers them as citizens.** How can we support this asymmetry when we compare their responsibility and their right to take action? If a person's responsibility is proportional to their freedom of action; should not underage people, like adults, have rights that are equal to their duties?

The widespread idea that youth are the future (and young people are the citizens of tomorrow) is also problematic and limits the scope that they can give to their involvement. **Isn't it time to talk about youths, rather than persisting in the illusory representation of a uniform singular youth?** And what value should be attached to the notion of citizenship? Especially if underage people, despite their obvious involvement, are not yet considered as citizens? **Youths are not only the future. They are already there, alive and active. They are determined to exercise the innate right of their citizenship and to be fully involved in applying their values.**

That is why, the Juniors Associations invite adults to question their own stereotypes and their representations of youths. That is in order to then change their posture and recognise the ability of underage people to volunteer collectively and autonomously.

#2 – Highlighting underage people’s volunteering

Actually this demand does not come out of nowhere. It is clear that young people are not kept away from civic life, when they have the space and the means: what the Juniors Association approach seeks indeed to offer them in particular. If so, they use their freedom of action with as much conviction and talent as adults. **If actions are highlighted, promoted as trustworthy and effective citizens’ initiatives and not just as shy youth projects, it would allow for a shift in the perspective that adults, political and technical decision-makers have on underage people.** This would also ease a change in the general posture that adults adopt towards young people. It would question the essentially hierarchical relationship that usually governs their interactions. It may lead to an idea of collective work, made of different perspectives but which are all valid.

It is not only the idea that adults have of young people that would benefit from this shift: but also young people about their own aptitudes and their legitimacy to take action, to feel involved and to have an impact on their environment. Showing young people what other young people are capable of is helping **to face their fear of not being fit, their creativity in the self-censorship that they can demonstrate, due to lack of confidence.** This lack of recognition from adults -close or “official”- can be observed at all levels of youth action and seems to constitute the most persistent obstacle to the engagement of young people. It appears to be transversal in all topics mentioned during the consultation. That is why it is essential and urgent to underline this matter and work on the construction of new representations of youth. If it is rewarding, it will necessarily benefit the whole society.



Chapter 2 - Support of local authorities

Concerns of local authorities (municipalities, departments, regions) are often connected to problems on their territory. **Juniors Associations are also closely connected to these concerns: in 2020, more than 70% of Juniors Associations declare that they carry out projects for local life's animation.**

Depending on the locality, disparities and inequalities can be observed. 64.5% of JA benefit from fundings from town halls or youth structures (The Juniors Associations: privileged spaces of artistic expression and cultural practices of young people? - Fransez Poisson, Maryam Mahamat & RNJA, 2021). However, local authorities do not all look at young people's projects in the same way. They also do not all provide them with the same support. Young people, in their daily working life, come up against administrative obstacles, lack of funding possibilities but also difficulties in communicating more widely, in a credible manner, to the public. **If underage people find the means to carry out their projects despite these complications, the fact remains that the ones we questioned express the need for a constantly improved and facilitated interaction with their local environment.**

In order to compensate for these tensions, two lines are proposed here : the first is about easing administrative and financing procedures and the second is in connection with the communication tools of local authorities.

Young people are involved in all areas, whether urban, rural or priority areas (according to City Policy), and face a wide variety of issues related to their geographic location and the gaps that may result from it.

- In 2020, **44%** of the Juniors Associations were **located in a municipality with less than 5,000 inhabitants** ;
- **21%** were part of a **priority area**.

#3 – Easing and improving access to fundings for projects managed by underage people

As introduced, **the support that youth projects receive from local authorities varies from one territory to another.** Favorable practices have developed in certain localities -without being widespread at the national level- such as the financial support of municipalities and communities of municipalities. 45.5% JA declare they benefit from them. Fundings and crowdfundings will thus come to support the budgets of youth projects. But once again **these opportunities do not concern every JA : 52% of them (the majority of them) declare to use exclusively self-financing** which appears often insufficient to ensure the implementation and the running of their projects (data relating to the study Juniors Associations: privileged spaces of artistic expression and cultural practices of young people?, published in 2021).

Although municipalities have developed over time support systems for youth initiatives, local authorities do not always open calls for projects to youth initiatives. They often get no positive answer when they seek funding for their projects. What keeps underage people associations from these funds is the complexity of the documents to be completed, as well as the need to have a SIRET number (and therefore to be declared at the prefecture). **The whole process to apply is an administrative barrier.**

In order to ease and develop access to funds for projects managed by young people, several recommendations can be considered: first, taking into account the JA and the **systematic opening of calls for projects for youth projects. The recognition of the Juniors Associations as trustworthy characters in associative and societal life.** It may be through with a "JA" checkbox on forms that would make it possible to apply. In the same way, the simplification of procedures would ease their applications for these calls for projects.

It is a question here for the funding bodies to **show adaptability with underage**



#4 – Using communication tools from local authorities and supporting underage people’s projects

The communication channels of local authorities (municipalities, departments, regions) are often perceived as official by the inhabitants and stakeholders on the territory. The regular use of these communications makes it possible to promote young people’s actions and reach a wider audience. It is by the way often used by associations law 1901 or local organisations. **When local authorities and institutions officially show their support for these projects, they surely participate in changing the perspectives of other decision-makers and more generally adults.**

«There is a big lack of support from the town hall, which refuses to support our projects because they do not think we are mature enough.»
- Abdel, 16 years old, JA from Sarthe

What if all the stakeholders in **local authorities reconsider the young people engaged as potential partners**, as citizens to be considered and promoted, without identifying them or constantly reducing them to their age? It can be for example : by **sharing the actions of young people in local communication**, by **promoting these initiatives** in the city newspaper or by inviting them to association meetings, but also by supporting them financially as mentioned in the proposal #3. This way local authorities and institutions would allow young people **to feel recognised**, inject new energy into their initiatives while **highlighting the variety of actions carried out on their territory.**

Chapter 3 - To a supportive school system helping underage people's volunteering

School is where young people spend most of their time. However, figures show that this is far from being a privileged place for JA to carry out their projects: only 20% of them carry out their activities at school. School claims to be republican. A "Citizen Course" was settled by the Ministry of National Education but the real part of its program which is dedicated to civic education is to date anecdotal : the frequency and the academic content focus on theoretical instructions and the subject of the underage people's right of association is omitted. Thus, **young people struggle to find the space and time necessary to explore their own vision of citizenship and to appropriate this notion, which remains abstract to them.**

For the ethnosociologist V. Poujol who studied Juniors Associations, **two worlds are compartmentalized : one is made of the extracurricular volunteering of young people, and the second is made of school environment.** This separation exists even though the two do not use the same skills and do not compete with each other.

According to her, it would seem that **extracurricular volunteering and school are complementary**, in the wealth and diversity of skills they provide. Associative involvement can allow some to «develop skills, experiences [...] but which they do not identify as possibly connected to their experience in the school world». Anyway the context it offers, informal and self-organised, can constitute a space for expression more suitable to some young people who could appear to be shy, reserved or disruptive at school.

The challenge therefore lies in the possibility of combining these two experiences, so that school and volunteering are no longer two parallel worlds that only coexist and respond to each other, but match, interconnect

European Council resolution relating to the **European objectives for youth** for the period 2019-2027 : **11 objectives** were set on «*quality learning*» : «*to ensure that learning from non-formal education is recognised and validated*» but also that we ensure «*that education gives young people practical skills related to daily life such as managing their finances.*»

#5 - «Moral and Civic Education» : a space for building a culture of volunteering

Our consultation shows that **in most cases the teaching staff is not aware of the JA volunteering possibility**. It also shows that in general young people are poorly informed about possibilities available for those who wish to volunteer.

«On Parcoursup (editor's note: French platform where young people apply for studies), the form we submit is partly about volunteering but they never talk to us about it before.»

- Sasha, 15 years old, JA from Lot et Garonne

The time devoted to "Moral and Civic Education" (editor's note: this subject is taught in school) is frequently sacrificed for the benefit of other subjects, the teaching of which is considered more urgent and more useful for the degree. Let's remember the "Equality and Citizenship" law project written in January 2017 and its article 33: "within the framework of the MCE, middle school and high school students are encouraged to participate in a citizen project within a general interest association.». **If theoretically, this subject seems to be the most suitable space to promote young people's volunteering, it is rarely practiced in school reality or it is limited to the historical summary of republican values.**

The proposal we put forward here is twofold: the first step would be to **inform educational staff** about the right of association for underage people and the possibilities for volunteering available for them. In a second step, this will lead to **a practical approach. But it must be introduced as an opportunity, responding to a real desire and should not be a compulsory schooling in any case.**

Young people are not only future adults. Young people do not have to be prepared for the future. The concrete realization of their aspirations, the possibility of putting their initiatives into practice now constitute opportunities for them to train, acquire skills and discern the challenges of the society in which they are already evolving.

Thus, the application of this proposal would participate -once again, for those who wish so- to **develop a culture of volunteering**. This culture must not be apart from the school environment, which would be a suitable environment for the development of a citizen's awareness. **It would definitely benefit the civic development of young people.**

#6 – Arranging timetables and spaces

In addition to the need to raise awareness among young people and school staff, another aspect seems problematic within the dynamic which keeps the associative projects of underage people at a distance from school environments: their inability to practically match their school duties and their volunteering. According to the involved young people, projects are **often seen as an extracurricular activity, even personal, and therefore less fundamental than their training**. Generally, schools are not supportive spaces for an involved youth, and they find themselves struggling with their school duties and their associative project management. It may be difficult because of material or logistical issues.

From this observation emerges one question: **Wouldn't it improve school if it was opening up to new possibilities of more learning methods? Larger and less formal? Wouldn't it improve teaching approaches? Attractiveness for young people?** The following proposal is therefore meant to ease the volunteering of young people and to make school an environment in which it can be implemented in a very practical way.

First, **logistical and material support should be systematic** for these projects and for those who carry them. For example, young people do not always have a place to meet and work on these projects. They may struggle to access materials to set them up. They may need printers, computer stations, etc. Providing them with meeting rooms and tools would be an important first step in **easing, recognising and supporting youth projects in school**.

«It would make sense within the institution itself to dedicate a part of this time (e.g. with a number of hours/y), because school aims to train and grow the future citizens. It will allow each young person to develop their volunteering and projects.»

- Thomas, 17 years old, JA des Landes



Then, young people would benefit from having access to a **timetable adapted** to their associative projects. It could be in the same way as sportsmen and women do (rugby classes, football, etc.). Indeed, it seems unjustified that the volunteering of one young person is less valued than the sport activities of another. While it is obvious that their school career must remain the priority within the school, **it is urgent to stop seeing volunteering as an obstacle to their school success** and to begin considering it rather as an additional asset to their development.

Flexibility of the teaching staff, arranged timetables according to the school rhythm seem to be the key elements of the harmony between school environment and associations, theory and practice. It would participate in settling a virtuous circle for the learning of young people.

«We are in the process of rediscovering a special relationship with the pupils. It gives back a meaning to their place at school and a meaning to the learning in purely school time.» - Mathieu, professor-librarian and JA Local Accompanists (LA)

Provox, the platform for structured dialogue in France. Coordinated by CNAJEP (Committee for national and international associations in Youth and Popular Education), Provox brings together the words and proposals of young people about European directives for young people.

During the last campaign, 2,000 young people wrote proposals and 56,000 young Europeans voted for them. Its proposal n°9 «give all young people the opportunity to have various volunteering experiences and recognise them at their fair value» presented ideas such as «**reducing school timetables** to promote volunteering for all, developing “discovery internship” agreements from middle school within associations and NGOs» ; or «**Recognising achievements and skills developed during experiences outside of school** (eg: financial management for an association treasurer, etc.)».

Chapter 4 - Tools and ways to take action

The introduction of this White Paper mentions the 2017 amendment to the law 1901. It is about freedom of association, it explains and clarifies the associative rights of underage people. **Theoretically and in accordance with this article, underage people therefore have the possibility to meet collectively and run activities, in the same way as adults do.**

Adults have access to a certain number of resources and tools to design, organise and carry out their projects. Without it, achieving these projects would be risky: an association law 1901 must provide coverage insurance for its members and volunteers. Although it is about non-profit organisations, the viability and integrity of their ambitions may depend on opening a bank account. Likewise, the success of an associative project may depend on the right to draft or sign documents with legal value (e.g. agreements or leases), to publish invoices (and therefore to provide services, to have stable cash flow) or to organise fundraisings.

The aspirations of involved young people are comparable to those of adults. But they are nevertheless stunted, or even paralyzed by the lack of administrative and technical means which should be available to them. **Compensating this administrative «desert» is one of the reasons the RNJA exists. The RNJA works as an intermediary between the major technical institutions and the Juniors Associations. It enables the JA to access the services offered by institutions.** Indeed, the RNJA provides a framework and legally represents the Juniors Associations. To do so, the RNJA vouches for them and develops partnerships and agreements with banks, insurance companies or institutions in order to connect them all.

However **in the daily practice of their associative life and despite the pursuit of their efforts to prove they are serious and trustworthy, underage people continue to face dubious interlocutors** and struggle to access these tools. Many associations under the law 1901 made up of underage people can testify: the law guaranteed them rights and tools which are still denied to them. They turn to the RNJA, no longer knowing what arguments they can use to convince.

#7 – Conducting a situational analysis about underage people’s right of association in France

The modalities of young people’s access to the fundamental tools of associative life are in practice more difficult than suggested by the law 1901 and its article 2bis amended by the “Equality and Citizenship” law of 2017: **the decrees necessary for its application has never been published**, so stakeholders and technical institutions often reduce it to a simple intention without really acting or materializing it in their practices. This is particularly true in banks or insurances. In addition, no promotional or information campaign was undertaken during the publication of this article: the fact that it is not respected can be partly explained by pure and simple ignorance of decision-makers about it.

Proposal #7, presented by the RNJA in its own name, therefore consists of **carrying out the widest and most detailed possible situational analysis of the associative law for underage people in France. The analysis should detail the real circumstances of application of this right.** Depending on the results and situation, the next step would be to supplement the law with possible decrees that would guarantee their implementation and provide young people with the resources they legitimately claim through information campaigns.

In **1990**, France ratified the **International Convention on the Children’s Human Right**, which does not stipulate an age limit for exercising its right of association guaranteed in its **article 15** :

- 1.** States members recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- 2.** These rights may only be restricted as are prescribed by law. Restrictions can be if they are applied in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, public safety or order, or to protect public health, morals, freedoms or rights.

#8 - Conducting a situational analysis about underage people's right of association in France

"Our JA is 5 years old. We ran into several problems due to our age. But the difficulties we have faced the most are with the bank. [...] Even though we respect the necessary procedures on the bank's side (signature of legal representatives, change of representatives, etc.), these are sometimes not taken into account."

- Liam, 14 years old, JA from Marne

As Juniors Associations -associations law 1901, made of underage people- have major issues with banking institutions, this proposal will focus on this matter. The RNJA was frequently given feedback on this subject during the consultation.

The first step is simply to **urge the banking institutions to overcome their perplexity and their lack of confidence in young people** and inform them about the legal texts: regarding the law indeed, age alone is not a valid or sufficient reason for refusing to open a bank account for an association.

In addition, banking institutions are stakeholders in the associative landscape in general and so they participate in its progress: **giving their trust to young involved people, wishing to invest in actions that will benefit collectively, it means choosing to invest in building a healthy and prosperous community life.**

Another counterpart of this proposal concerns the practical management obstacles in daily life. It will depend on both young people and banks : it may be different from one territory to another because of inequalities. For example, Juniors Associations in rural areas have more difficult access to banking tools. **Banks and credit funds do not all have the same approach to underage people's volunteering**, nor all the same flexibility.

If the RNJA has established a national agreement with the Cr dit Mutuel (editor's note : French cooperative bank), collaborations with other banks remain uncertain to this day and depend on the interpersonal relations with managers, **which is penalizing the Juniors Associations**. Sometimes they have to work with banks whose geographical position is potentially inconvenient for the proper management of their accounts. Bank fees can also vary considerably from one bank to another. Thus, it would be interesting to run a joint reflection, in order to ease access to bank tools and management by young people and to appease banking institutions. It could **bring together representatives of banks, government institutions and the RNJA, to work and develop**, if not a standardization of treatment and contractual terms, at least **a climate of understanding that would benefit young people who remain full customers, despite their age**.

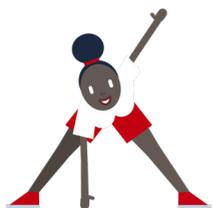
These two proposals are based on numerous feedback gathered from young people. That is why it is central **to give young people the technical possibilities to carry out their projects. It means giving them the legitimacy they claim and giving meaning to their actions**. Tools that the RNJA creates for young people -and of course its support goes beyond tools- substitutes for means that should be available. The purpose of the RNJA is however to become obsolete some day: it would be a great success when young people do not need it anymore, if they have the guarantee to access tools and recognition that is due to them. Only then, the RNJA will have completed its work.



Chapter 5 - Raise awareness about gender inequalities

In 2015, the RNJA initiated a reflection about the place of young girls in Junior Associations and in its own governance, through the study «Juniors Associations: participation through the prism of diversity» carried out by E. Porte and F. Fish from INJEP (National Institute of Youth and Popular Education). **Work to restructure its Board Member has been carried out, with the idea of guaranteeing parity of its members and encouraging young girls to fairly assume the roles of representatives in Junior Associations. The RNJA also adopted inclusive writing in the drafting of its statutes in 2016.**

The RNJA considers it urgent today to get involved more actively on gender identities' issues. As a popular education association that addresses and works with young people, initiating actions in favor of the **inclusion and prevention of discrimination and gender inequalities, sexism, homophobia and transphobia** appears to be essential. The Juniors Associations and associations law 1901 made up of underage people are unfortunately not exempt from **ordinary sexism, discrimination and gender stereotypes** that permeate society as a whole. Two young members of Juniors Associations observe:



*«It's sociological, girls have less confidence to take responsibility»,
- Emily, 18, JA from Nord*



*«I left the place (of president) because he talks more and he has the charisma»
- Isaline, 13 years old, JA from Nord*

While the harmful nature of these patterns and the behaviors are undoubted today, the effective means to identify, remedy or even prevent them continue to be delayed. It does not seem to be a priority. However, **this is a central and inspiring concern for many Juniors Associations. It is in the core of a lived reality and it expresses as a common concern at all levels of daily life.**

This concern and their desire to reshape gender relations is illustrated by the **determination and skills they demonstrate in the active fight against discrimination.** As we have sought to prove, if young people are not the citizens of tomorrow but of today, making room in the public debate for the subjects in which they are involved is not only legitimate: it is the necessary condition for a healthy and frank democratic life. It cannot be resolved by the comfortable misunderstanding that may exist between its various generations. That is why it seems necessary to promote exchange and discussion in order to understand and encourage the evolution of our society towards a more inclusive model that respects everyone.

Here are two presentations of Juniors Associations working on gender inequalities :

Shiva Ecofeminist : «Highlight the place of women and minorities in society. Fight for political ecology and against inequalities in general. Raise awareness of all types of discrimination.»

Les Gazelles : «Put on theater shows that talk about social issues (gender discrimination, etc.), while entertaining any audience. Go meet people far from theaters (eg: retirement homes, schools, neighborhoods, etc.)»



#9 - Training and informing about gender inequalities discrimination

The Juniors Associations and associations law 1901 for underage people actively contribute to informing and raising awareness of people working with them and who are in the same territories. They even contribute to their awareness of societal patterns that fuel sexism and gender inequalities.

«Through its actions, the JA impacts society even if it does not realize it. It is a work of patience and courage and fortunately it exists because it is a link among all other links in the “anti-discrimination” web» - JA Jeunes en actions

In order to continue and be able to deepen this essential work at the local level, the young people involved need knowledge and training on gender discriminations. **However, it is not enough to train young people alone, as it is obvious that all the workload on these issues cannot fall on them.** Training the adults around them and those involved in their projects is an urgent matter, particularly since these are adults who are in daily contact with young people. They cannot ignore the issues. That is why this proposal is also addressed to youth workers and teachers.

It seem interesting and achievable to ask for **external interventions by activists** associations specialized in gender identity issue and the resulting discrimination (eg «[En avant toutes](#)» association, as corresponding NGO with expertise on these specific issues). Likewise, it might be appropriate to approach **some Juniors Associations** and associations law 1901 with underage people **who have taken an interest in and learn about these topics, in order to participate in discussions.** This would be an effective way to promote discussion among young people on current societal issues (peer-to-peer exchanges) but also to encourage intergenerational dialogue.

To question your association gender inclusiveness, the Mouvement Associatif (editor's note : a federation representing French associations at the national level) created the «inclusiscore» tool (available on www.insclusiscore.org). The platform has many resources on inclusion and you can calculate a score measuring inclusiveness within your association. The test consists of 22 questions helping you to question your own practice: the associative project, the accessibility and the governance.

#10 – Supporting gender identity activism and volunteering of underage people

Youth projects about gender are very welcomed and find support in the ecosystem of Junior Associations. This latest proposal from the White Paper is about two practical actions that follow that direction.

First, it would be interesting to make room for young people and this topic in the **political debate**. Juniors Associations (and associations of underage people under the law 1901) may be invited during the preparation of political debates, where they may meet with activist associations specialized in the matter : **mixing various perspectives from young people and adults would be interesting**. Even if they are already involved in similar causes. It would give an innovative transversal point of view to the debate and the directions that need to be taken.

«There is a lot of sexism in politics, especially when speaking: big disrespect from men [...] and self-censorship on the girl's side»
- Soumaya, 15 years old, JA from Pas de Calais

Second, it is about promoting **calls for projects on gender inequalities** which would also be accessible to Junior Associations (and associations of underage people under the law 1901). In these calls they can defend their values and participate in societal progress in the public interest. **These calls for projects will also mean recognition and tools that match their ambition**. It may also encourage the creation of such projects.



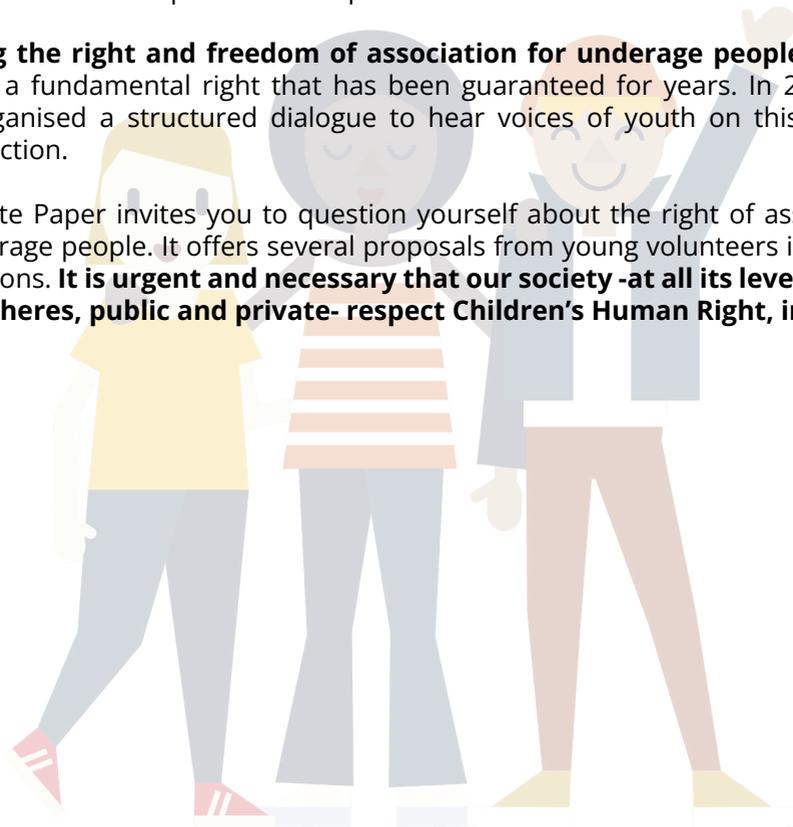
Conclusion

As this White Paper has sought to prove, **young people are not left out when it comes to taking action. The purpose of this consultation was to give them a voice about the main obstacles they identify. Obstacles that block a real desire to get involved and take action.** The most common ones are their lack of legitimacy in the eyes of adults, their lack of recognition in the private, school, or daily life, and their difficulty in accessing the technical and administrative tools they need.

This consultation and its proposals does not claim to be exhaustive. However it claims to be transversal, according to other advocacy actions carried out jointly by many popular education structures working for and with young people. They show the multitude of ways that young people have to take action. **The proposals gathered here are practical and intended to be realistic, but it cannot be without the assistance of the political and technical decision-makers** who should now listen and put them into practice.

Claiming the right and freedom of association for underage people, means claiming a fundamental right that has been guaranteed for years. In 2021, the RNJA organised a structured dialogue to hear voices of youth on this matter: Deliber'action.

This White Paper invites you to question yourself about the right of association for underage people. It offers several proposals from young volunteers in Juniors Associations. **It is urgent and necessary that our society -at all its levels and in all its spheres, public and private- respect Children's Human Right, including**





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