



## 1. Introduction

1.1 Globally, many governments have been promoting youth participation in public affairs in recent years, not only for “harnessing their resilience, creativity and ideas” but also for enhancing public accountability of policy decisions.<sup>1</sup> Likewise in Hong Kong, the Government has introduced a host of policy initiatives over the years to enhance youth voices, like appointing more young people into advisory and statutory bodies (“ASB”), holding youth forums, strengthening youth networks in the 18 districts, and hiring young people to drive government’s policy innovation and project co-ordination.<sup>2</sup>

1.2 While the youth are not entirely dismissive of participation in public affairs through “institutionalized” channels, as observed from the rise in young members in ASB and the narrowed gaps in both voter registration and turnout between young people and older counterparts in some recent elections, the community sees the need to widen and deepen such participation to better address the lingering discontent among the youth.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, young people in the new millennium seem to communicate more through digital modes (e.g. online platforms and social media) instead of the traditional engagement channels on public affairs. The authorities may need to reach out to the target youth in a more innovative manner. The public also pins high expectations on the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau just set up in July 2022 to tackle these issues, as one of its key policy objectives is to “provide a platform for young people to participate in public affairs”.<sup>4</sup> Over the past three years, the subject of youth participation in public affairs was discussed in the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) on at least four occasions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2022).

<sup>2</sup> The definition of youth and their age brackets can vary widely across places. This piece focuses on persons aged 15-35.

<sup>3</sup> 青年創研庫 (2020) and MWYO (2021).

<sup>4</sup> Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (2022b).

<sup>5</sup> GovHK (2021, 2022a).

1.3 At the request of Hon JoePHY CHAN Wing-yan, the Research Office has studied the policy measures to promote youth participation in public affairs in Canada and Luxembourg. These two places are selected because they have introduced a host of new measures to enhance youth representation after extensive policy reviews, with certain effectiveness. This *Information Note* begins with an account of recent global trends on the subject, followed by corresponding development and major issues of concerns in Hong Kong. It then switches to policy measures to enhance youth participation in public affairs in Canada and Luxembourg, along with a table for easy reference (**Appendix**).

## 2. Recent global developments

2.1 According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989, youth should have the “right to express views” and “opportunity to be heard” in public policies and matters affecting them.<sup>6</sup> **The World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) also support the principle of empowering young people in public institutions, in the light of a number of social benefits:**<sup>7</sup>

- (a) given that one-third (31%) of the global population are young people aged 15-34, taking their views on board is necessary for enhancing accountability of public policies;<sup>8</sup>
- (b) youth can offer creativity and act as “agents of change”, and hence helps improve government services;<sup>9</sup> and
- (c) youth empowerment helps cement their trust in public institutions and foster “active citizenship”.

2.2 In OECD, at least 22 member states had declared youth engagement in decision-making as one of the objectives in their national youth strategies by April 2020.<sup>10</sup> Likewise in the Mainland, the State Council highlighted the importance of youth participation in social and political activities in its Youth Development Plan released in April 2017. This was reiterated in the White Paper on Youth published in April 2022.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations (1989).

<sup>7</sup> United Nations (2018a), World Bank (2022) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020a).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations (2022).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations (2020).

<sup>10</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020a).

<sup>11</sup> 國務院 (2017, 2022).

**2.3 However, there are concerns over underrepresentation of the youth in public policy-making in advanced places.**<sup>12</sup> For instance, just 22% of the Members of the Parliament (“MPs”) in OECD were aged below 40 in 2020, visibly below the proportion (34%) of youngsters in the overall voting-age population.<sup>13</sup> Prima facie, youth stand a lower chance of winning in election campaigns due to less command of resources and political networks relative to older candidates, but some critics opine that “adult-centric stereotype” portraying youth as inexperienced citizens is also a relevant factor. Reportedly, the minimum age threshold for voting (mostly 18 in OECD) and for running for MPs (averaged at 20 in OECD) could become barriers of participation, indirectly leading to distrust in government and apathy to public affairs from the youth. Moreover, as young people nowadays may participate in public affairs through “non-institutionalized” modes (e.g. online discussion and activism), some consider that traditional modes (e.g. voting and candidacy in elections) are old-fashioned.

**2.4 Some governments of advanced places have thus attempted to engage youth through innovative measures.** *First on youth consultation and advisory bodies*, some four-fifths (78%) of member states in OECD have set up national youth councils with membership comprised mostly of youth.<sup>14</sup> Also, more than half (56%) of the countries have set up youth parliaments to educate youngsters on parliamentary work and engage them in policy discussion.<sup>15</sup> *Secondly on minimum voting age*, it was lowered from 18 to 16 in Austria in 2007, and from 18 to 17 in Greece in 2016. *Thirdly on youth engagement in policy formulation*, both German and French governments introduced youth impact assessments in those draft laws affecting young people. In Portugal, youth participatory budgeting was introduced in 2017, allowing young citizens to make decisions on small public projects valued at a total budget of €300,000 (HK\$2.6 million).<sup>16</sup> *Finally on social media and online platforms*, an e-participation platform (i.e. ePartool) was set up in Germany in 2014 to garner youth voice from online discussion.<sup>17</sup> In the United Kingdom (“UK”), a social media tool named as “Involved” was launched for the youth in 2020.<sup>18</sup>

**2.5 Despite the recent engagement efforts, OECD still opines that “youth participation and representation in public and political life remain limited” around the globe.**<sup>19</sup> Taking OECD member states as an example,

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<sup>12</sup> Borkowska, S. et al. (2020), Cammaerts, B. et al. (2016) and Checkoway, B. (2011).

<sup>13</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021).

<sup>14</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020a).

<sup>15</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Bernardino, S. and Freitas Santos, J. (2020).

<sup>17</sup> Council of Europe (2017).

<sup>18</sup> British Youth Council (2022).

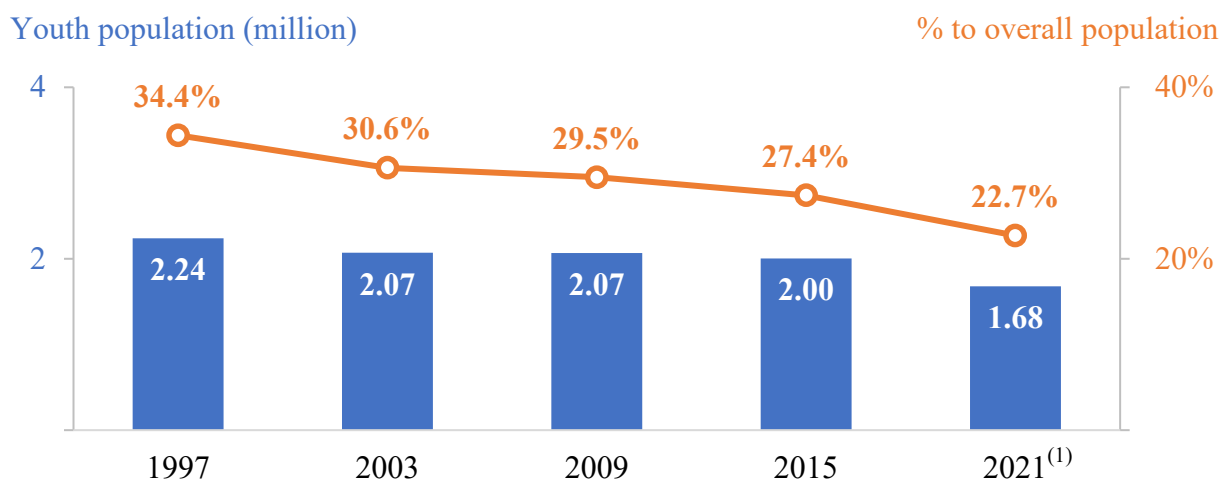
<sup>19</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021).

68% of young people aged 15-24 came out to vote in elections, slightly lower than that of the overall voting population (69%).<sup>20</sup> While the proportion of younger MPs aged under 40 in OECD was just 22%, only 3% of cabinet members were aged under 35. A global study on youth development also pointed out that “political and civic participation” registered a decline in overall terms during 2010-2018.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Recent developments in Hong Kong

3.1 In Hong Kong, so far there is no clear and consistent delineation of the target age group for local youth policy measures.<sup>22</sup> For the purpose of this Note, youth are defined as those aged 15-35, with the upper age limit set in line with that adopted by the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth (“MSSY”) when recruiting young members to join ASB. As a broad indication and upon decades-long downtrend in local fertility, the youth population aged 15-35 fell by a cumulative 25% to 1.68 million during 1997-2021. Youth now account for 22.7% of the local population, down from 34.4% in 1997 (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1 – Number of young people aged 15-35 in local population**



Note: (1) Provisional figure.

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2022).

<sup>20</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020b).

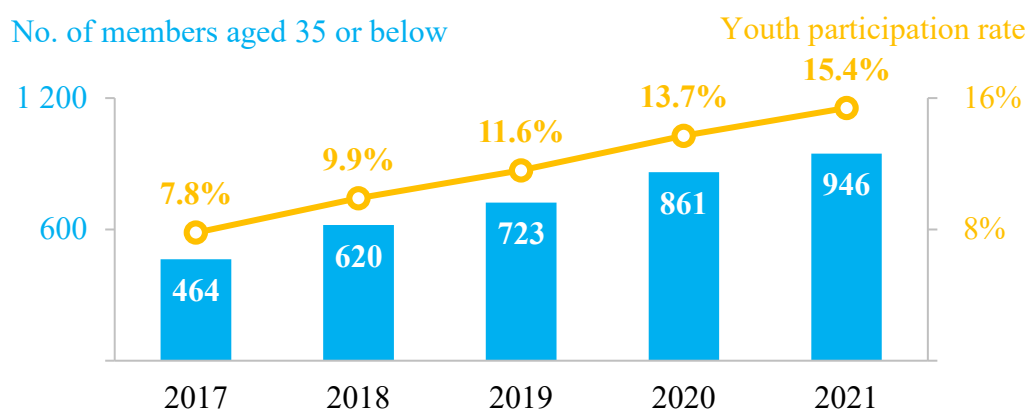
<sup>21</sup> 102 out of 181 countries in the study registered a decline in terms of political and civic participation, while the remaining 79 improved. See Commonwealth Secretariat (2021).

<sup>22</sup> For example, the Large-Scale Youth Programme Funding Scheme targets children and youngsters aged 6-29, whereas the Youth Development Fund targets those aged 18-35. See Commission on Youth (2018).

3.2 **Youth can make their voices heard through “institutionalized” channels, especially after an array of new measures introduced in recent years.** Here is a concise summary:

- (a) **ASB membership:** The Government launched MSSY in 2017, inviting youth to self-recommend themselves to be members of ASB. After a pilot scheme and four phases, altogether 102 young people out of 6 800 eligible applications were selected by June 2022.<sup>23</sup> Coupled with other appointments, the overall ratio of youth aged 18-35 in ASB doubled from 7.8% in 2017 to 15.4% in 2021 (**Figure 2**);

**Figure 2 – Young members<sup>(1)</sup> in advisory and statutory bodies, 2017-2021**



Note: (1) Reflecting only the age of non-official members on their first appointment.  
Source: Statistics from Home and Youth Affairs Bureau upon enquiry.

- (b) **Youth Development Commission (“YDC”):** Established as a high-level ASB on youth issues in 2018 and chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, YDC was tasked to enhance policy co-ordination within the Government and to oversee youth-related policies like youth education, career pursuit and home ownership.<sup>24</sup> Shortly after its establishment, YDC set up a task force in June 2018 specifically on youth outreach and engagement, aiming to strengthen communication channels with young people and encourage their participation in public affairs more actively;

<sup>23</sup> The fifth phase of MSSY was launched in February 2022 and the appointment procedure is expected to complete in the fourth quarter of 2022. See Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (2022a).

<sup>24</sup> The former Commission on Youth, which was chaired by a non-official member, has been incorporated into YDC since April 2018.

- (c) **Annual recruitment of Youth Ambassadors:** In collaboration with YDC, the then-Home Affairs Bureau (“HAB”) has organized youth talent development programme annually since 2019, with 200 Youth Ambassadors aged 18-30 being recruited so far.<sup>25</sup> The recruits will (i) receive “top-notch and comprehensive training”; (ii) participate in large-scale public events; and (iii) lead real-life community projects. Upon completion of the programme, they will be further considered for the appointment to ASB;
- (d) **Youth dialogues:** YDC also organizes online policy meetings with the youth from time to time. In 2020-2021, three policy thematic meetings covering topics of youth employment, post-graduation pathway and positive thinking were held. As at end-May 2022, these meetings recorded 168 000 online views in total;<sup>26</sup>
- (e) **District Youth Networks (“DYN”):** In 2014, the Government set up DYN with an annual provision of HK\$18 million to provide more platforms for young people to participate in social affairs and express their views in 18 districts. During the financial years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, DYN organized over 500 youth activities for 90 000 participants in total, attracting some 10 900 members as at end-2021;<sup>27</sup>
- (f) **Recruiting youth for policy innovation:** Young people were recruited to the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Unit in 2018 to obtain experiences in public administration and chances to be heard by senior officials. Some 20 out of more than 2 200 young applicants were eventually recruited on non-civil service contract terms, with 90% of them aged below 35;<sup>28</sup> and
- (g) **Online platforms for youth:** In 2007, the Government created the Youth Portal (youth.gov.hk) as a single window on youth-related information and services.<sup>29</sup> Yet there were just 20 000 followers of social media attached to this Portal at end-June 2022.

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<sup>25</sup> Youth Development Commission (2022a).

<sup>26</sup> Youth Development Commission (2022b).

<sup>27</sup> Home Affairs Bureau (2022).

<sup>28</sup> GovHK (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Efficiency Office (2022).

### 3.3 Youth participation in local public affairs can also be reflected in the following election statistics:

- (a) **Voter registration rate:** There has been a robust upsurge in voter registration rate for young people aged 18-35, from 58.3% in 2000 to 70.0% in 2016, and further to 89.7% in 2021 (**Figure 3**). This helps narrow the gap vis-a-vis the respective rate for the overall population;
- (b) **LegCo election:** The voter turnout rate for youth aged 18-35 rose from 49.2% in 1998 (about 4 percentage points lower than that of overall voter population) to 57.9% in 2016 (practically matched with the overall figure)(**Figure 4**). Yet the favourable turnout rate failed to sustain in the 2021 election, plummeting to 7.9% and lagging older voters. This lacklustre performance was affected by multiple factors such as (i) alleged scepticism and polarization in certain segments of society after the social unrest in 2019; (ii) ongoing pandemic situation; and (iii) electors' unfamiliarity with the new electoral system.

As regards the age of elected LegCo Members, the share of those aged up to 35 at the time of election rose from 3.3% in 1998 to a peak of 9.4% in 2016, before easing back to 4.4% in 2021; and

- (c) **District Council ("DC") election:** The turnout rate of youth rose steadily from 29.8% in 2011 to 36.4% in 2015 (though still lower than the overall turnout rate), before soaring to 73.1% in 2019 (**Figure 5**).

As regards the age of elected DC Members, the share of those aged up to 35 at the time of election tripled from 8.5% in 1999 to 26.9% in 2015, and then further surged to 48.4% in 2019. After a wave of resignations and disqualifications, only 31 or 27.2% of incumbent elected DC Members with age information were aged 35 and below by end-2021.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Since February 2021, a total of 333 DC Members ceased to hold office on the grounds of (a) resignation; (b) disqualification due to invalid oath-taking or absence from oath-taking; and (c) not being duly elected according to the court's judgments. Among those 311 former DC Members with age information available, 194 or 62% of them were aged 35 and below in 2019. For details, see GovHK (2022b).

**Figure 3 – Voter registration rate, 1998-2021**

	1998	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2021
- Youth aged 18-35 <sup>(1)</sup>	N/A	58.3%	61.3%	59.4%	63.9%	70.0%	89.7%
- Overall population	68.6%	67.5%	70.7%	72.3%	73.6%	78.9%	92.5%

Note: (1) Ratio of registered electors aged 18-35 in youth eligible for voter registration.

Source: Statistics from Registration and Electoral Office upon enquiry.

**Figure 4 – Voter turnout and elected young Members in LegCo elections**

	Election year						
	1998	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2021
<b>(A) Voter turnout rate (%)</b>							
- Youth aged 18-35	49.2%	38.3%	51.6%	39.8%	47.6%	57.9%	7.9%
- Overall population	53.3%	43.6%	55.6%	45.2%	53.0%	58.3%	29.7%
<b>(B) Elected young Members aged 35 and below</b>							
- No. of young Members	2	1	0	2	4	6 <sup>(1)</sup>	4
- As a share of Legco Members	3.3%	1.7%	0.0%	3.3%	5.7%	9.4%	4.4%

Note: (1) Excluding three elected candidates aged 35 and below who were disqualified and were not entitled to act as Members of LegCo.

Sources: Legislative Council Secretariat (2022) and Census and Statistics Department (2021).

**Figure 5 – Voter turnout and elected young Members in DC elections**

	Election year					
	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
<b>(A) Voter turnout rate<sup>(1)</sup> (%)</b>						
- Youth aged 18-35	N/A	N/A	N/A	29.8%	36.4%	73.1%
- Overall population	35.8%	44.1%	38.8%	41.5%	47.0%	71.2%
<b>(B) Elected young Members aged 35 and below</b>						
- No. of young Members	44	75	82	102	123	232 <sup>(2)</sup>
- As a share of DC Members	8.5%	14.2%	15.4%	18.9%	26.9%	48.4%

Notes: (1) Ratio adjusted by excluding registered electors in uncontested constituencies.

(2) Out of 452 elected DC Members in total, only 425 provided age information on the election website.

Sources: Legislative Council Secretariat (2017), Registration and Electoral Office (2019), and Census and Statistics Department (2021).



3.4 **Notwithstanding the above engagement efforts, discontent among youth about the poor prospects of fulfilling their life aspirations as well as unsatisfactory quality of living remained prevalent.** The severe shock and damage to the community after the social unrest in 2019 seems to have reinforced the concerns that the voices of youth are not well-heard in public institutions and policy decision process. For instance, the increased youth participation in ASB membership to close to 1 000 appointees is still dwarfed by the size of the whole youth population. Moreover, about three-fifths (57%) of youth considered youth membership in ASB as “political vase”, according to a survey.<sup>31</sup> There are also concerns about the perception of limited relevance of ASB to youth. In the same survey, only 27% of young respondents indicated interest in applying for MSSY. Among the remaining 73% of young people indicating no interest in applying for MSSY, 49% cited concern regarding inadequate qualification and skill, 36% expressed lack of interest in any specific ASB and 28% was sceptical about their influence in ASB. Grassroots youth also hold the impression that ASB are not relevant to them, given almost all (98%) of the 102 appointees under MSSY were degree holders,<sup>32</sup> whereas nearly half (45%) of non-official members of YDC were older than 35 years old on their first appointments.

3.5 Adequacy of channels is another major issue. For instance, the activities organized by DYN across 18 districts are mainly for general youth development and leisure purpose, but not for policy-making as advocated by some youth organizations. Meanwhile, given youth’s enormous exposure to online channels (as they typically spending 4-5 hours online each day) and their reliance on social media for information and action on public affairs, **there are concerns that the Government has not made good use of online platforms to engage young people in policy discussion.**<sup>33</sup>

3.6 Lukewarm response to “institutionalized” consultation channels, failure to sustain youth’s interest in participating in electoral activities and insufficient youth-oriented communications may have driven some young people to express their views through “non-institutionalized” means instead. As a matter of fact, some fourth-fifths of the 9 727 arrestees in connection with the social incidents in 2019 were young people aged 30 and below.<sup>34</sup> This serves as a reminder of the dire consequence when segments of the young persons feel left out of public affairs and choose more radical methods to vent their grievances.

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<sup>31</sup> 青年創研庫(2020).

<sup>32</sup> Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (2022a).

<sup>33</sup> Commission on Youth (2018) and Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies (2017).

<sup>34</sup> Statistics provided by the Hong Kong Police Force for the period between June 2019 and August 2020.

## 4 Policy developments in Canada

4.1 In Canada, youth population aged 15-34 rose by 15% to 9.85 million between 2001 and 2021, but its proportion in total population fell by 1.8 percentage points to 25.7% concurrently.<sup>35</sup> **As Canada is an immigrant country, its youth population displays a greater diversity in terms of ethnicity, language and culture.**<sup>36</sup> In line with the global trends, Canadian youth are also found to have lower levels of interest in politics and electoral process relative to their older counterparts, but higher levels of community engagement through online platforms, donations and protests.<sup>37</sup> For instance, notwithstanding a rise in the voter turnout rate for youth aged 18-34 from 41.4% in 2004 to 56.6% in 2019, they were still lower than the overall turnout rate (**Figure 6**). Moreover, the proportion of young MPs aged 18-35 in the House of Commons hovered at a low level of 7%-12% in the past two decades.

**Figure 6 – Voter turnout and elected young MPs<sup>(1)</sup> in Canada**

	Election year						
	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019	2021
<b>(A) Turnout rate<sup>(2)</sup> (%)</b>							
- Youth aged 18-34	41.4%	47.5%	43.5%	42.5%	57.3%	56.6%	N/A <sup>(3)</sup>
- Overall population	58.5%	62.8%	56.5%	58.5%	66.1%	67.0%	62.2%
<b>(B) Elected young MPs aged 35 and below<sup>(4)</sup></b>							
- No. of young MPs	28	24	23	31	37	23	19
- As share of MPs	9.2%	7.7%	7.4%	9.7%	12.1%	9.7%	9.1%

Notes: (1) Referring to Members of the House of Commons.

(2) Ratio of votes to electoral population, rather than to registered electors.

(3) For reference, turnout rates were 46.7% for youth aged 18-24 and 52.8% for youth aged 25-34.

(4) Covering only MPs who provided their year of birth in the Parlinfo database.

Sources: Elections Canada (2022b) and Parliament of Canada (2022).

4.2 Compared with other member states of OECD, Canada is considered a latecomer in terms of formulating youth policy. When Justin Trudeau led the Liberal Party in winning the General Election in 2015 at 43 years old, he was the second youngest Prime Minister in the Canadian history, next only to Joe Clark

<sup>35</sup> Statistics Canada (2022).

<sup>36</sup> During 2012-2014, 49% of immigrants were aged 15-35. See Statistics Canada (2016).

<sup>37</sup> A survey found that young Canadians aged 15-24 were 41% more likely to engage in informal political activities than older people. See Anthony, L. (2016), Canadian Heritage (2016) and Elections Canada (2021a, 2021b).

(aged 39 in 1979). He became the catalyst of change at the top level, unleashing initiatives like (a) creating a new cabinet post of Minister of Youth concurrently taken up by himself in 2015;<sup>38</sup> (b) setting up Youth Secretariat under Privy Council Office in 2016;<sup>39</sup> and (c) developing the first-ever youth policy for persons aged 12-30 in Canada in 2019.<sup>40</sup> Youth voice is also increasingly heard in policy-making, with the ratio of young officials aged 18-34 in charge of youth affairs rising to 57% in 2019, the second highest among member states of OECD.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4.3 Policy measures taken to promote youth participation in public affairs in Canada are summarized below:

- (a) **Youth Council fully represented by young people aged 16-24:** In 2016, the Prime Minister set up the Youth Council (“PMYC”) under his office. While PMYC is an advisory body on youth matters for the Prime Minister, all members must be youngsters aged 16-24.<sup>42</sup> Altogether 54 youngsters were appointed to PMYC in five cohorts over the past six years. They can put forward topics to PMYC for consideration, and are allowed to share their topics with the public through social media. During 2019-2021, PMYC held a total of 23 council meetings, covering topics such as youth employment, anti-racism and vaccine uptake;<sup>43</sup>
- (b) **Funding youth-led community projects:** In 2010, the Canadian government launched the Youth Take Charge (“YTC”) Program to strengthen youth-led community projects. This Program provides direct financial support for up to 75% of cost incurred in organizing civic engagement project (e.g. Youth in Action Project in 2012 for children and youngsters aged 7-26 to engage in community and participate in youth leadership training forums), with an overall

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<sup>38</sup> In his second term as Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau passed his duties on youth policy to Bardish Chagger (who was 39 years old at the time and once held the positions of Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism) in November 2019. The Minister of Youth was restructured to Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth at the same time, and further to Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth in October 2021. See Office of the Prime Minister (2019).

<sup>39</sup> Youth Secretariat serves as an information and resource hub for government departments, youth-serving organizations and youth. It supports Canada to adopt a whole-of-government approach to addressing youth issues and provides advice to federal departments on youth engagement. See Government of Canada (2021a).

<sup>40</sup> Government of Canada (2019).

<sup>41</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020a).

<sup>42</sup> Privy Council Office (2019b).

<sup>43</sup> Government of Canada (2022).

budget of C\$2.1 million (HK\$13.3 million) in 2021-2022.<sup>44</sup> Over the past five years, YTC projects on average reached over 700 000 young people annually;<sup>45</sup>

- (c) **Enhancing youth representation in key positions:** In the youth policy announced in 2019, the Canadian government aimed to appoint at least one young person in 75% of the boards of public corporations (e.g. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Bank of Canada) by 2024. Moreover, it intends to increase youth appointments among some 3 900 Governor in Council (“GIC”) positions (e.g. heads and chairpersons of agencies and commissions), although no specific target was set and the Canadian government has not released the progress so far;
- (d) **Pre-registration of underage voters:** To facilitate first-time voters to exercise their voting right, a pre-registration mechanism was set up in April 2019 specifically for young Canadians aged 14-17 to become “future electors”.<sup>46</sup> Underage youth can apply through a registration form on request or through the income tax return form. The names of pre-registered youth will be automatically added to the official voter register once they turn 18 years old;
- (e) **Youth Summit and youth dialogues at national and community levels:** In February 2018, the Canadian government launched a national dialogue with youth before formulation of youth policy, eliciting over 10 000 responses from youngsters national-wide.<sup>47</sup> More than one-third (37%) of respondents opined that youth should be “involved in the political and decision-making process”.

In May 2019, 300 young leaders shared their views on issues like youth employment and youth health at the Canada Youth Summit. The exit survey showed that 85% of the summit participants felt that such a dialogue was positive.<sup>48</sup> At the community-level, PMYC members are encouraged to hold youth-led dialogues themselves, such as the “gun and gang violence” discussion held in Etobicoke in September 2019 and Montréal in February 2020.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Government of Canada (2021b) and Canadian Heritage (2021b).

<sup>45</sup> Canadian Heritage (2021c).

<sup>46</sup> Elections Canada (2022a).

<sup>47</sup> Government of Canada (2018).

<sup>48</sup> Privy Council Office (2019a).

<sup>49</sup> Canadian Heritage (2020).

In August 2021, the Canadian government published its First State of Youth Report, taking stock of implementation progress of youth policy on a quadrennial basis. It consulted nearly 1 000 young people in the drafting process and the Report was written by a youth advisory group comprising 13 young people;<sup>50</sup> and

- (f) **Deepening online engagement:** In 2013, the Canadian government set up dedicated social media channels known as “Leaders Today” in both English and French to engage youth online. While hashtags (#CdaYouthAction and #LeadersToday) are used to tie conversations together, online short videos, testimonials and graphics are created to reach young audience.<sup>51</sup>

4.4 On **policy effectiveness**, the Canadian youth policy introduced in 2019 represents a “step in the right direction” of civic engagement and gives “significant” leadership opportunities for youth, according to commentators and the aforementioned First State of Youth report in 2021.<sup>52</sup> The United Nations also recognized Canada as one of the few countries that “have actively sought youth involvement in policy discussions” through PMYC.<sup>53</sup> In a global ranking exercise on youth development among 181 places conducted by Commonwealth Secretariat in 2018, Canada took the position of 36th in the overall ranking, but just 177th in terms of “political and civic participation”.<sup>54</sup> This lacklustre performance was largely attributable to a lack of national youth policy in Canada back then, a key indicator for the domain of participation. However, it is expected that the position of Canada is likely to show significant improvement in the next round of release, taking into account more policy initiatives being introduced as from 2019.

## 5. Policy developments in Luxembourg

5.1 Luxembourg is a small member state in the European Union (“EU”), with a population of just 645 400 in 2021. Luxembourg is also open to overseas talents and immigrants, with foreigners (mostly citizens from other EU countries but also “third-country nationals”) taking up almost half (47%) of its population.<sup>55</sup> For youth aged 15-35 residing in Luxembourg, they amounted to 183 300 in 2021 and represented a share of 28.4% in overall population. Among these young people, over 80 000 or 46% are not Luxembourgish citizens.

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<sup>50</sup> Canadian Heritage (2021a).

<sup>51</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018).

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness (2019) and Canadian Heritage (2021a).

<sup>53</sup> United Nations (2018b).

<sup>54</sup> Commonwealth Secretariat (2021).

<sup>55</sup> European Commission (2022a) and STATEC (2022).

5.2 Luxembourg government began to formulate youth policy in the early 2000s, after a policy review conducted by the Council of Europe in 2002 concluded that youth participation in policy-making was “still in its infancy” in the country.<sup>56</sup> In 2008, the **Luxembourg government enacted the Youth Policy Law, defining youth as those aged 12-29 and stating clearly that strengthening “participation” of young people is one of its three strategic objectives.**<sup>57</sup> The Luxembourg government introduced its first Youth Pact (i.e. national youth strategy) in 2012, containing 76 initiatives in five fields (with 19 initiatives related to youth participation in society), followed by an updated Youth Pact in 2017.<sup>58</sup> This apart, as the government is obliged by law to review the youth situation quinquennially, three National Youth Reports were published between 2010 and 2020 accordingly.<sup>59</sup>

5.3 The Luxembourg government is required under the Youth Policy Law to establish three specific institutions to enhance youth participation in public affairs, on top of other non-statutory youth measures. **Key measures are summarized below:**

- (a) **Higher Council for Youth (“HCY”):** HCY is an advisory body on youth matters set up in 2008, comprising 22 young members appointed by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (“MENEJ”) on a renewable term of three years.<sup>60</sup> It has the authority to (i) set up commissions or working groups on youth issue; (ii) study youth issues on its own initiative or by request of the government; and (iii) recommend reforms on youth-related policies. HCY can be convened by the Minister of MENEJ, the Council President or the written request of one-third of members. For instance, HCY held an online meeting in January 2022 to present two opinion papers on youth housing and socio-educational work to the Minister of MENEJ;<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Council of Europe (2002).

<sup>57</sup> Le Service Central de Législation (2008).

<sup>58</sup> Luxembourg Government (2012, 2017).

<sup>59</sup> Each of the National Youth Report has a different theme. The 2015 report focused on youth transition to adulthood, whereas the 2020 report focused on health and wellbeing.

<sup>60</sup> It is mandated to have a diverse portfolio of 22 representatives, comprising 8 from youth organizations, 4 from youth services, 4 from organizations for the promotion of young people, 2 from student organizations and 4 from others. See Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (2017).

<sup>61</sup> MENEJ is responsible for preparing and implementing government policy on education, childhood and youth. See Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse (2022a).

- (b) **Youth Parliament (“YP”)**: YP is a platform set up in 2008 for young people aged 14-24 to discuss subjects affecting their lives. In each school year, YP recruits over 60 delegates to participate in a wide range of parliamentary activities (e.g. plenary sessions, commissions meetings and visits).<sup>62</sup> YP has adopted over 110 resolutions in total since 2008, covering topics like mental health, inequalities and migration policy.<sup>63</sup> These resolutions would be formally presented in the hearings of the Chamber of Deputies (i.e. the Parliament of Luxembourg);
- (c) **National youth dialogues**: In line with the practice of the EU, the Luxembourg government launched the first national dialogue with youth in 2013.<sup>64</sup> In an 18-month work cycle, young people can convey their opinions on political decisions on selected topics to policymakers through different forms of dialogues (e.g. survey, meetings, interviews and exchange with politicians).

For instance, the dialogue discussed the proposal of setting up “Youth Guarantee” in 2013-2014, offering every youth aged 16-25 a job offer, training or internship within 4 months after leaving school or losing job.<sup>65</sup> The Youth Guarantee proposal was formally implemented in June 2014. The Luxembourg government pledged in the Youth Pact 2017 to extend such structured dialogue to young people outside youth organizations;

- (d) **National Youth Council (“NYC”)**: NYC is an umbrella organization of 31 youth member institutions in Luxembourg, aiming to promote youth participation in society and discuss various youth topics with ministries.<sup>66</sup> On a biennial basis, NYC organizes Youth Convention for youngsters aged 12-30 to discuss and exchange ideas with politicians directly through the themed workshops. The Youth Convention was last held in November 2021, with 80 young representatives across the country to discuss youth topics like mental health, school and employment;<sup>67</sup> and

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<sup>62</sup> YP comprises five permanent commissions with different scopes, namely (a) foreign and European affairs; (b) economy and labour; (c) education; (d) environment; and (e) equal opportunities and integration.

<sup>63</sup> Le Parlement des Jeunes (2022).

<sup>64</sup> Le Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Luxembourg (2022).

<sup>65</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse (2014).

<sup>66</sup> National Youth Council of Luxembourg (2021).

<sup>67</sup> Le Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Luxembourg (2021).

- (e) **Funding support to youth organizations:** Under the Youth Policy Law, the Luxembourg government is obliged to provide subsidies to youth service organizations with missions meeting the 13 objectives listed in the Law (e.g. promoting active citizenship and social integration of youth). In 2021, MENEJ provided funding support to a total of 86 organizations at an overall budget of €19.8 million (HK\$182 million).<sup>68</sup> This apart, the Luxembourg government also provides up to 50% of funding to local youth centres engaging young people in social activities.

5.4 On **policy effectiveness**, 12 MPs in Luxembourg are aged under 40 in 2021, representing 20% of overall MPs, noticeably up from 12% in 2014.<sup>69</sup> As regards the global ranking of “political and civic participation” of youth, Luxembourg leaped from the 25th in 2015 to the 3rd in 2018, on the back of active participation in youth organizations (e.g. 57% of young people are members of such organizations) and through well-developed informal channels (e.g. petition and online discussion).<sup>70</sup> However, only 56% of youngsters aged 16-30 in Luxembourg voted in the last election, despite compulsory voting requirement.<sup>71</sup> Reportedly, many young foreign workers and immigrants have resided in Luxembourg for less than five years and thus yet to be qualified as electors, resulting in lower voting propensity.

## 6. Concluding remarks

6.1 In **Hong Kong**, notwithstanding a host of policy initiatives in recent years like the establishment of a high-level YDC chaired by Chief Secretary for Administration and the introduction of MSSY for youth appointments to ASB, there remain widespread concerns in the community that youth voices are not well-heard in public institutions and policy decision process. Participation in “institutionalized” channels appeared to have cooled rapidly in the past few years. Moreover, many young people consider that ASB membership has limited policy impact and the Government has not made good use of social media and online platforms. The perception of ineffectiveness of “institutionalized” participation

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<sup>68</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse (2022b).

<sup>69</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2021).

<sup>70</sup> For instance, about 70% of young people in Luxembourg had created or signed a petition before, far higher than the average of European Union at 42%. See European Parliament (2021), Commonwealth Secretariat (2021) and European Commission (2022b).

<sup>71</sup> The Luxembourg government does not release voting statistics by age group. Findings here are based on European Parliament Youth Survey conducted in 2021. See European Parliament (2021).



channels by the youth may prompt certain segments to contemplate more radical means for expressing their views on public affairs.

6.2 In **Canada**, the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pioneered the first Youth Policy of the country in 2019, thereby pledging high-level attention from the government on youth-related issues. A number of initiatives rolled out in the past few years empowered the youth in decision making and policy consultation, including youth-led community projects, youth representation in public corporations, and PMYC members-initiated youth dialogues, among others. To enhance youth participation in public affairs, underage youth can be pre-registered to facilitate their voting once they reach the age of 18. The government conducts periodic review of youth policy and has launched dedicated social media as a more youth-friendly and direct channel for engagement.

6.3 In **Luxembourg**, the enactment of the Youth Policy Law in 2008 mandates the government to establish statutory institutions to engage with youth, including HCY and YP. The government also put efforts into setting up more diverse consultation channels (such as national youth dialogues). These mechanisms empowered young people to initiate policy studies and formulate reform proposals (with the adoption of “Youth Guarantee” proposal being a solid example of successful “institutionalized” participation in public affairs). The formal linkage between YP and the Chamber of Deputies, where the former’s resolutions will provide opportunities for hearings in the latter, may have contributed to Luxembourg’s rise in ratio of young MPs aged under 40. Financial support to and collaboration with youth groups are other notable features in Luxembourg to encourage youth participation in public affairs. With these acclaimed results, “political and civic participation” in Luxembourg was ranked the top three in the world.

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## Youth participation in public affairs in selected places

	Hong Kong	Canada	Luxembourg	
<b>A. Basic facts</b>				
1.	<b>Youth population aged 15-35 at end-2021</b>	1 677 300 <sup>(1)</sup>	9 848 000 <sup>(2)</sup>	183 300
2.	<b>Ratio of youth to overall population</b>	22.7%	25.7%	28.4%
<b>B. Indicators of youth participation</b>				
3.	<b>Registered electors of youth aged 18-35</b>	1 025 000 (2021)	6 848 300 (2020)	-
4.	<b>Voter registration rate of youth</b>	89.7%	90.9%	-
5.	<b>Turnout rate of youth in latest elections</b> - Legislative Council / Parliamentary election - District Council election	7.9% (2021) 73.1% (2019)	56.6% (2019) -	56% (2021) <sup>(3)</sup> -
6.	<b>Share of elected young members aged 35 and below</b> - Legislative Council / Parliament - District Council	4.4% (2021) 48.4% (2019)	9.1% (2021) -	-( <sup>4</sup> ) -
<b>C. Promotional measures of youth participation in public affairs</b>				
7.	<b>Year of publishing first youth policy / law</b>	-	2019	2008
8.	<b>Definition of youth's age in youth policy / law</b>	-	12-30	12-29
9.	<b>High-level body fully composed of young people</b>	✘	✓	✓
10.	<b>Youth appointment to advisory bodies</b>	✓	✓	✘
11.	<b>Youth parliament</b>	✘	✘	✓
12.	<b>Youth dialogues with officials</b>	✓	✓	✓
13.	<b>Funding for youth-led projects in community</b>	✓	✓	✓
14.	<b>Pre-registration of young voters</b>	✘	✓	✘
15.	<b>Dedicated online participation platform for youth</b>	✓	✓	✘

Notes: (-) Not available.

(1) Provisional figure.

(2) Reflecting youth population aged 15-34 only.

(3) In the absence of official data, the reported figure is the ratio of youth aged 16-30 voted in the last local, national or European election from the European Parliament Youth Survey 2021.

(4) For reference, one-fifth (20%) of young members in Luxembourg's parliament are aged below 40 in 2020.

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