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NECE talked to Carla Schneider-Dahm from the [Political Innovation Association](#), about their start-up [FollowTheVote](#) for reshaping access to political information.

NECE: Why did you found the Political Innovation Association?

Carla Schneider: We at PIA e.V. believe that a healthy democracy can only be further developed by a generation that is capable of making decisions and has a desire to participate. That is why a group of young Europeans came together with the goal to reinvent the way we inform ourselves (politically) in the 21st century. We see ourselves more like a community and movement of young people where everyone can join.

The Political Innovation Association e.V. is committed to new forms of digital, political education and democratic participation for youth and young adults - inclusive and for all educational levels. We want to stimulate critical thinking and create concrete ways to socially and politically participate. We are committed to a vibrant democracy and a diverse society. In Germany, Europe & the whole world.

NECE: How much do you think younger generations are influenced by the spread of fake news and how much does it affect political decisions?

Carla Schneider: Increasing populism, growing attention to conspiracy theories and most recently the storming of the US Congress are symptoms of a new form of media that is fundamentally changing the way we are exposed to information. Negative effects are especially felt by the younger generation, as 89% spend time on social media every day while being exposed to unfiltered, unreliable and often extreme political information. Moreover, young citizens are less exposed to high quality information as they perceive this as complex, time consuming and boring. Not surprisingly, this group has insufficient knowledge of political processes, is less politically engaged and loses trust in state institutions.

NECE: With FollowTheVote you want to convey political knowledge to young citizens in an exciting and interactive way. What method makes your App unique?

Carla Schneider: From the beginning, FollowTheVote was built to serve young users. One of the main issues the target group is facing is the amount of time that they need to inform themselves about politics. Therefore, FollowTheVote is designed to let you become a political expert in less than 5 min a day.

Another barrier for our target group is the level of complexity and lack of entertainment. Hence, we create snackable information through different media, such as video content and interactive tools, such as voting options and quizzes. To make sure that our users return on a daily basis, the app is built like a game. Users can level up by earning points and challenge friends. Lastly, young people are underrepresented as a political voice. Therefore we don't only see FollowTheVote as a technological solution but more as a movement to raise the voices of the next generation. Consequently, we send the aggregated opinions of our users to the parliament and we show concrete ways to make a change. For instance by signing a

petition within just one click or by providing contact to non-governmental organisations, activist groups and political parties.

NECE: How is the offer being accepted and what reactions have you received from your target group so far?

Carla Schneider: We recently completed our prototype testing with around 80 test users. Our App will be available in the App Store in August, to prepare young German citizens for the upcoming election. Based on the prototype testing and our extensive market research we confirmed that our target group is very enthusiastic about the solution. This is also reflected in the number of people who signed up for the product launch on followthevote.com.

What is even cooler is that our team now consists of 17 young enthusiastic Europeans helping us to bring the App to life. Everyone in the team is working on a voluntary basis because we share the same vision of strengthening democracy, peace and freedom for the next generations.

PIA e.V. shows that social action is fun and benefits everyone. We think that this is one of the best indicators for the success we might have in the future.