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# **Bringing Young Citizens to Vote in Elections and Referendums as One of The Forms of Developing Legal Consciousness**

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## **Abstrac**

This article is dedicated to the issues of raising the level of legal and political culture in young people and their active participation in elections. Over the last years, there has been a tendency of decline in electoral activity in our country. Young citizens also do not show proper interest in elections and referendums. Political process is a major social sphere in a country and, in order for young people to actively take part in it, it is necessary to upgrade their political culture. In accordance with the provisions of the Russian Constitution, the people are the only power holder in the country and it executes its power on its own or through national and local governmental authorities. Referendum and free election are some of the forms of direct expression of the power of the people. In this article, the authors suggest their ways of engaging young Russian citizens in elections and referendums.

Keywords: elections, referendums, state, young people, young citizens, political consciousness, stabilization of society, government authorities, local government authorities.

**Hacer que los ciudadanos jóvenes voten en las elecciones y referéndums como una de las formas de desarrollar la conciencia jurídica**

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## Resumen

Este artículo está dedicado a los problemas de elevar el nivel de cultura legal y política en los jóvenes y su participación activa en las elecciones. En los últimos años, ha habido una tendencia a la disminución de la actividad electoral en nuestro país. Los ciudadanos jóvenes tampoco muestran un interés adecuado en las elecciones y referéndums. El proceso político es una esfera social importante en un país y, para que los jóvenes participen activamente en él, es necesario mejorar su cultura política. De acuerdo con las disposiciones de la Constitución rusa, el pueblo es el único titular del poder en el país y ejecuta su poder por sí mismo o por medio de las autoridades gubernamentales nacionales y locales. El referéndum y la libre elección son algunas de las formas de expresión directa del poder del pueblo. En este artículo, los autores sugieren sus formas de involucrar a los jóvenes ciudadanos rusos en elecciones y referéndums.

Palabras clave: elecciones, referéndums, estado, jóvenes, ciudadanos jóvenes, conciencia política, estabilización de la sociedad, autoridades gubernamentales, autoridades del gobierno local.

### 1. Introduction

#### Introduction of the Problem

For our state, youth absenteeism is an urgent problem. This is due to the fact that young voters act as the main electoral resource, because out of all age categories the young generation represents the most socially active part of society and can secure the constitutional state and civil society (Yastrebova et.al., 2016). Young people, taking part in various forms of political activity that have an impact on the political life of society, are becoming the strongest instrument with which it is possible improve the political process in our country. According to statistics, in the Russian Federation the number of voters who are about 30 years old is around 26.1 million people. That is why young people need special attention from society, as well as raising their legal culture.

#### Importance of the Problem

The issues of the development of the legal culture of youth and its involvement in elections were raised in the fundamental works of R.R. Nizamov, L.P. Konvisareva (2018). In this paper, the authors examined the main forms and methods of improving the legal culture to enhance the participation of young

people in the electoral process. More than that, they identified the main problems and directions of development of the current legislation.

Some issues related to attracting young citizens to participate in elections and referendums are discussed in the articles of M. Yu. Sadyrova (2014), who identifies two forms of increasing the legal culture and electoral activity of young people: oral and written.

D.A. Khachaturian (2017) names the environment, family, school and higher education institutions, volunteering, the media, political parties and social movements, etc. as the key components of raising the legal culture of young people in Russia and their involvement in the electoral process.

## 2. Method

The research included the application of theoretical, general philosophical methods (dialectics, system method, analysis, synthesis, analogy, deduction, observation, modeling), traditionally legal methods (formal-logical), as well as methods used in concrete sociological research (statistical, expert ratings, etc.). The main applied method was the system and structure method, which allowed to identify the most pressing issues related to the principles of electoral law, as well as increasing the level of legal and political culture of young people and the electoral activity of young citizens.

The combination of the above methods revealed the possibility of forming a steady interest of young citizens in the electoral process, as well as ways to increase the level of legal and political culture of young people and the electoral activity of young citizens.

## 3. Results

It has been determined that elections and referendum are one of the main institutions of a democratic state, since they represent the highest form of direct expression of the power of the people. Elections enable the population to exercise their rights and freedoms, as well as provide the society with basic guarantees and improve the conditions of political, economic and social life. During the electoral process, citizens not only gain experience and skills, but also learn political values. Thus, active participation in elections contributes to the development of political consciousness and the implementation of the political socialization of society.

The study found that the legislation of the Russian Federation provides for many types of elections that can be classified on various grounds. But during

the elections, the interests of young people are not taken into account and not protected by law.

We believe that it is necessary to make changes to the legislation of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation and each region needs to develop its own "Youth electoral concept". It is necessary to state each region's own directions for solving the problem taking into account the specifics of its development.

In order to improve legislation, we suggest using social networks as one of the possible means of campaigning. This will make it possible to enact the rules established by law for all means of influence on the electoral activity of young people, since it is this category that is the most active user of social networks and is more perceptive than the adult generation.

#### 4. Discussion

In accordance with the provisions of the Russian Constitution, the people are the sole holder of power in the state, exercising it independently or through national and local governmental bodies. One form of direct expression of the power of the people is referendum and free elections.

In addition to the Russian Constitution, the concept of elections, as well as their legal regulation (procedure for organizing and conducting), is provided for by the Federal Law "On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right to Participate in the Referendum of Citizens of the Russian Federation".

According to the aforementioned Federal Law, elections are a form of direct will of citizens exercised in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, federal laws, constitutions (charters), laws of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation, charters of municipal formations - in order to form a national or local governmental body or empower an official.

In order for the people to exercise their power, as well as the ability of voters to exercise their rights and freedoms, elections must be based on the basic principles of suffrage. These are principles of suffrage, equality, direct suffrage, secret ballot, alternativeness (competition).

All of the above principles are inextricably linked and form a single system (Popova, 2015). They act as an important criterion for the lawfulness and legal compliance of participants during elections. The fundamental principles of electoral law are the basis on which the mechanism of legal regulation of the constitutional right of citizens to elect and be elected to national and local governmental bodies is based.

In turn, we consider it appropriate to note that in the Russian Federation every citizen has the right to elect and be elected.

It was established that the presidential election of the Russian Federation held on

March 18, 2018 serves as a vivid example of the observance of voting rights in Russia.

Many scholars and politicians are looking into the issue of raising the legal culture of our society, because the involvement of the young generation in referendums and elections is one of the things that depends on it (Sadyrova, Maslova, Maslov, 2015).

One of the main public spheres in the state is the political process, and in order for the youth to actively take part in it, its political culture must also be upgraded. Political culture is based on experience, ideology and socialization, and also has the ability to pass from the older generation to the younger. The political culture of young citizens represents the assimilation of political knowledge and the level of emotional development in the field of political relations. Due to the political culture, the views and affiliation of young people to different political communities are formed. At the same time, it helps to navigate political phenomena and contributes to the adaptation and communication of young people in the political environment (Kirichek, 2013).

A vivid manifestation of the legal culture of young people, as well as an indicator of their civic maturity and interest in the political, social and economic sphere of the state's activity, is participation in elections (Filimonova, Bedenkov, 2016). Currently, there are two trends in the electoral activity of citizens from 18 to 30 years. On the one hand, there is active participation of young citizens in political life, and on the other hand, a passive political position and no desire to participate in the electoral process. It is this part of the passive youth that by its indifference allows other age categories to build the political life of society. Several external and internal factors influence the electoral activity of voters (Betekhtina, Olukhov, 2012). The external factors include the political, economic and social situation in the country, and the internal factors are the individual's financial position, lack of prospects for the future, etc.

In order to improve legislation on this topic, given that young people spend most of their time on computers - on the Internet and on social networks, State Duma Member V.V. Milonov on April 10, 2017 introduced, as a legislative initiative, a federal bill "On legal regulation of social networks and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation". The federal bill has been developed for the purpose of legislative regulation of social networking. The proposed comprehensive regulation of legal relations arising from the use of social networks is the most rational and convenient in law enforcement. To achieve the stated goal of the study, the adoption of the bill "On the legal regulation of social networks and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation" will not be enough. It is necessary to regulate the process of agitation policy itself. Chapter 5

“Regulation of Certain Types of Activities in Social Networks” of the bill “On the legal regulation of social networks and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” should be supplemented with the article “Pre-election Campaign and Referendum Campaign on Social Networks”. According to some scholars, in addition to the above, it seems necessary to include in article 50 of the Federal Law “On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and Rights to Participation in the Referendum of Citizens of the Russian Federation” dated 06.06.2002 # 67-FZ social networks as one of the possible means of agitation (Nizamov, Konisareva, 2018). The title of the article may be presented as follows: “Article 50. General conditions for conducting election campaigning, campaigning on referendum issues on the channels of television and radio broadcasting organizations, in print and online periodicals and social networks.” This will make it possible to consolidate the rules established by law for all means of influence on the electoral activity of young people, since it is this category that is the most active user of social networks and has is more perceptive than the adult generation. Thus, by improving the legal education of young people and adjusting the rules for providing legal information in social networks (Volkova et.al., 2015; Kurbanov et.al., 2018), it is possible to expect positive results in improving the legal culture of young people in the electoral process. But this will not be enough if regional authorities are not involved (Strygina, 2018). The problem of attracting young people to participate in the electoral process depends directly on each federal subject, the regional authorities of which develop programs and apply methods to solve this problem. Therefore, as an additional direction to improve the legal culture of young people in the electoral process, it is proposed that each region develop its own “Youth electoral concept”. In this concept, it is necessary for each region to state its own directions for solving the problem taking into account the specifics of its development (Abrosimov, 2015).

The youth is a special and very significant social group on which the general direction of development of the state and law largely depends (Filimonova, Bedenkov, 2016). Traditionally, it constitutes about a quarter of the total population of a country. They say that in assessing the level of legal culture of the young generation, first of all, it is necessary to turn to the profile of the legal consciousness of young people. Legal awareness of young people is characterized by features of a social and psychological nature, distinguished by age, socio-economic and socio-political status of a given socio-demographic group of the population (Betekhtina, Olukhov, 2012). The main factors influencing the formation of youth legal awareness are the results of the activities of state and municipal authorities, international organizations, religious denomina

tions, socio-demographic groups and other collective entities, including the family, educational institutions, labor collective, the media, the entertainment industry and individual leaders in their totality. This activity should be aimed at youth rallying (Zheleznaya, 2018; Vinogradova et.al., 2016). The imperfection of the law and its application, selectivity in the application of the law, the insufficiency of institutional mechanisms guaranteeing the unconditional fulfillment of the law, its inevitability, adequacy and fairness of sanctions for violation of legal norms contribute to the formation of legal nihilism devaluing the true spiritual and moral values and serving as a basis for many negative social phenomena (alcoholism, drug addiction, pornography, prostitution, family violence, domestic violence, neglect of the rights and lawful interests of others, infringement on someone else's property, vigilanteism, lynch law). Therefore, it is very important to take into account the structure of value orientations of young people, their moral attitudes (Tokar 2013; Fomicheva et.al., 2017).

In turn, N. Yu. Evplova emphasizes such specific features of youth legal awareness as the low level of legal awareness, expressed skepticism in evaluating the activities of law enforcement and judicial authorities, the effectiveness and power of the current legislation of the Russian Federation, atrophy of will. As the author points out, the main means of eliminating defects in the legal consciousness of young people in Russia can be the development and implementation of a federal state program of legal education for young people (Evplova, 2000; Shilovskaya et.al., 2016).

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of this issue allows the authors to conclude that for our state the absenteeism of young people is an actual problem. This is due to the fact that young voters act as the main electoral resource, because of all age categories the young generation is the most socially active part of society and can be the guarantor of the rule of law and civil society. Young people, taking part in various forms of political activity that have an impact on the political life of society, are becoming the strongest instrument with which you can improve the political process in our country. According to statistics, in the Russian Federation the number of voters who are about 30 years old is around 26.1 million people. That is why young people need special attention from society, as well as raising their legal culture. Today, a democratic society continues to be built and developed in Russia. One of the most important elements of democracy is the participation of citizens, primarily the young audience, in the electoral process. One can determine the level of democratic values by the attitude of the



population to the institution of election.

Recently, young people have not only been learning from the experience of the older generation, but also influence social development. Unlike other age categories, young people are mobile and perceptive to everything new, and also have the ability to quickly adapt to a changing environment. Starting an adult independent life, young citizens should realize their potential and contribute to the development of our society through participation in elections at various levels. However, in order for citizens from 18 to 30 years old to be able to realize the significance of their active and passive right, they must feel the support of the authorities. Therefore, it is necessary to involve national and local governmental bodies in the formation of the legal culture of young voters, in legal education and in raising their electoral activity.

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