



Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Fabrikstrasse 8, CH-3012 Bern

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**UNIVERSITÄT  
BERN**

Wirtschafts- und  
Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät

Departement  
Sozialwissenschaften

**Institut für Politikwissenschaft**

# **Participation of women, young people and people with a migrant background as exemplified in the disposal of radioactive waste project**

Sub-project to the research project  
“Participatory waste disposal policy”

Claudia Alpiger (project handling)  
Prof. Dr. Adrian Vatter (project management)

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## Summary

A sub-project was established within the framework of the “Participatory waste disposal policy” project to study the degree of participation observed among women, young people and people from a migration background (MB). This report presents the findings from this sub-project. In addition to the general participation in the political process seen among these three population groups, a study is made of the involvement of these groups in the regional participation process for the search for sites for deep geological repositories for radioactive waste. This report is arranged in three parts: overview of the state of research, evaluation by the author, and recommendations for action.

The **focus on these three population groups**, women, young people and people from an MB, is based on the findings from research carried out when establishing the regional participation process in which women, young adults and people with an MB were seen to be under-represented, if at all, in the regional conferences (RCs). The purpose of this sub-project is to find out why these population groups are less involved in politics – whether in politics in general as well as in the regional participation process in particular. Based on contributions from research and on interviews held by the author with various individuals (chairmen and chairwomen of RCs, a social scientist, two women from the nuclear industry, a national councillor with an MB and nine young people aged between 16 and 25) the reasons for low participation on the part of the three population groups will be established and finally recommendations for action to be taken will be drawn up to achieve an improvement in participation among these three groups. On the one hand, the recommendations for action should serve to improve general political involvement among the groups. On the other, these are concrete recommendations for action to be implemented when organising regional participation in the sectoral plan procedure in the future.

In the **research** a number of reasons are cited as to why women, young people and people with an MB are less involved politically than men, adults and people who do not have an MB. Basically, the groups in question dispose of less resources (time or financial), interest in politics is low and all three groups are less motivated. In the case of women, it is above all the different (gender related) degree of socialisation, the different situations in life, the structural barriers to access (also because of a conservative perception of the role of women) and the basic attitudes of society to women in politics that play a role in the low participation in politics. Lack of interest in politics and low political education in particular can be cited as the reasons for low political commitment in the case of young people. Young adults also feel incompetent and too inexperienced to get involved in politics or the political institutions are perceived as too complicated or even as obsolete. People with an MB often have a similar socio-economic profile to people who in principle never participate in elections and referendums; their standard of education is lower, they come from a section of the population with a low income, are often young, do not have an extensive personal network and have little political knowledge. Other reasons also play a role in the low participation of people with an MH, such as command of the language, the (lack of) a feeling of belonging to society, or the early socialisation process (lack of experience with democracy in the parental home).

**Evaluations by the author** have shown on the one hand that all three population groups are poorly represented in politics in general as well as in the RCs – they are not represented at all in some RCs. On the other, based on the interviews, reasons could be elaborated to explain why women, young people and people with an MB are less inclined to participate in politics. The reasons collated from the interviews mainly correspond to the causes already mentioned in the state of research. The interviewees also made some recommendations as to how participation among the three population groups could be improved both in general and specifically with respect to the regional participation process and many of these are included in the recommendation for action.

As an approach to improving the low rate of political participation seen in the three population groups in Switzerland we would like to make some **general recommendations**, namely expand and promote political education in schools (*I.*), provide more support and encouragement to women who are involved in politics because of the prevalence of a very conservative image of women (*II.*), increase esteem for and improve attitudes towards young adults and people with an MB (*III.*) and make politics more accessible and attractive to all (*IV.*). We would **recommend those responsible for regional participation** to involve young people and women in arranging events specifically for these groups (*V.*), to win the services of role models for women, young people and people with an MB to actively recruit members (*VI.*), and to target individuals (and groups) more directly and more personally using methods suitable for each group (*VII.*).