



LET'S GET
ACTIVE!

"Let's get Active! Incentives for citizens active participation in the democratic life of the European Union" (ACTIVE)

Ref. Nr. 55879-CITIZ-1-2014-1-PL-CITIZ-CIV
Co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union





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PROJECT PARTNERS

All the project activities took place in 4 partner countries: Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Italy.



FOUNDATION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES (POLAND)

<http://www.fundacjaaie.eu>



FUTURE WORLDS CENTRE (CYPRUS)

<http://www.futureworldscenter.org>



ASOCIATIA EuroDEMOS (ROMANIA)

<http://eurodemos.org/>



COOPERATIVA SOCIALE COOSS MARCHE ONLUS scpa (ITALY)

<http://www.cooss.it>

GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION



AIM

The main aim of the project was to increase the level of engagement and democratic participation of the European Union citizens in the democratic life of the European Union being aware of the role they can have in shaping the EUs' policies and thus the future of Europe shaping.

GOALS

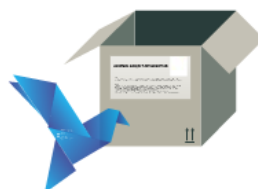
1. Providing an European public space where the issues related to low participation in the democratic life of the EU and the ways of stimulating the active participation could be discussed and debated (by open on-line research, 4 National and 1 International Citizens Forums).
2. Stimulating the democratic participation of the citizens who are not yet involved in the EU policies shaping by reaching them through information campaign and qualified environments of the active civil society organizations.
3. Contributing to strengthening and empowering democracy in the European Union through developing possible solutions(Recommendations)for the major problems associated with low participation in the democratic life of EU and disseminating them.



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OPEN ON-LINE RESEARCH

GOAL. To offer a space where EU citizens could share their opinions, needs, expectations and ideas concerning active participation in the democratic life of EU, in order to learn the reasons and root causes of not participating in the democratic life of the EU and what the possible incentives.

METHODOLOGY. The open on-line survey lasted 3 months, from April 2015 till June 2015. To achieve the goals a web-based survey solution was chosen (SURVEY MONKEY) and 5 different translated versions were realized: English, Italian, Rumanian, Polish and Greek.

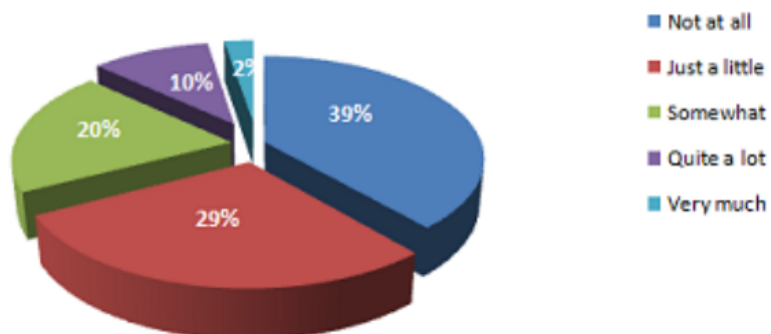
RESULTS

The survey collected a total of **701 questionnaires** and participants come from **40 different countries**, both inside and outside Europe. The research reached several EU citizens age groups (**42% young people, 53% adults, 5% elderly people**) and they include about **65% of women** and about **35% of men**.

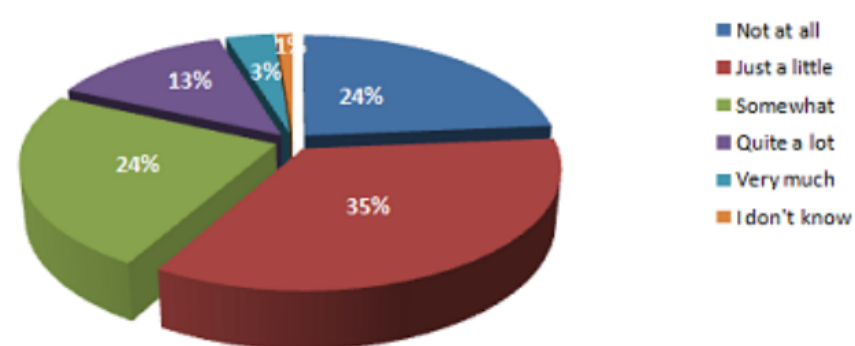
SOME REMARKS ON GLOBAL ANALYSIS

- The participants reveal **interest in public matters** (81%) and also the desire to be informed (77.3%) and involved (60.7%) in decision concerning European public matters.
- Respectively the **tools considered most effective** to be involved and encourage in participation are: Social Networks (69.8%), Conferences, seminars, thematic public meetings (66.9%), Web sites (65.4%), meetings and workshops (61.6%) and thematic events (56.5%).
- Youth and community centers (72.2%) are defined as the **most effective settings** to promote participation, followed by activities organized by non-governmental organizations (67.1%), Voluntary environment (63.3%) and Working or studying environment (62.4%).
- The main actions indicated as **connected to the idea of "participation in democratic life"** are: Getting involved in initiatives that aim to change society/ citizen's initiatives (78.4%), Participate in Elections (European elections 69.1%, National elections 73.4% and Local authorities elections 72.1%) and Taking initiatives (69.1%). In most cases, citizens joining the survey, known only sometimes (55.6%) to whom they should turn with their ideas/needs, to have them implemented.
- The survey inspects the **feeling of citizens to be persons who actively participate in the democratic life** at Local, National and European level. The same question is proposed at the beginning and at the end of the survey, as a path for the acquisition of increased awareness.
- On regard of the **awareness on direct democratic tools**, most of the participants declared that they have information about (57%), and another relevant part affirmed that probably they know any direct democracy tools, but they don't know that are called "direct democracy tools" (33%), on the other hand only the 10% said they never used them.

**Feeling to be a person who actively
participates in the democratic life at
European level
(At the beginning of the survey)**



**Feeling to be a person who actively
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METHODOLOGY. The phenomenon as the important steps in democratic duties and Organizations on the promote it, it is a set activities. The list of the European Commission Parliament member

NATIONAL CITIZENS FORUMS

GOALS. To sum-up and discuss the results of the open on-line research, to group these results into the main thematic areas and to develop national recommendations for diminishing the obstacles for active participation and introducing incentives for becoming an active citizen.

METHODOLOGY. The National Citizens Forum took place in: Nicosia, Cyprus; Bielsko-Biala – Poland; Iasi – Romania; Jesi – Italy. 130 citizens participated in these Forums.

RESULTS:

- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIMINISHING THE OBSTACLES FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTRODUCING INCENTIVES FOR BECOMING ACTIVE CITIZEN

OPEN ON-LINE RESEARCH

For a space where EU citizens could share their opinions, needs, expectations and ideas active participation in the democratic life of EU, in order to learn the reasons and root causes of existing in the democratic life of the EU and what the possible incentives.

METHODOLOGY. The open on-line survey lasted 3 months, from April 2015 till June 2015. The goal was a web-based survey solution was chosen (SURVEY MONKEY) and 5 different translated versions were realized: English, Italian, Romanian, Polish and Greek.

Collected a total of 701 questionnaires and participants come from 40 different countries, both inside and outside Europe. The research reached several EU citizens age groups (42% young people, 53% elderly people) and they include about 65% of women and about 35% of men.

MARKS ON GLOBAL ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIMINISHING THE OBSTACLES FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Foster trust within EU citizens and institution, allowing effective knowledge, exchange and relationship;
- Break down economic and linguistic barriers, starting from youth;
- Introduce bodies closer to citizens, who pose as intermediaries (local associations and NGOs) supporting different suitable and effective local initiatives;
- Exploit public places to stimulate ideas and project, starting from the diffusion of information and approaching to the promotion of grassroots initiatives concerning EU topics/matters (i.e. web radio, free radio station, etc.);
- The authorities should contribute to diminishing the obstacles/barriers for participation by being competent, open and listening to the citizens' needs, cooperative, accessible, effective and being hold accountable for the promises they made and the activities they undertake. Support for civil society organisations and 'civic activation initiatives' is expected;
- The society (community) should be promoting civic activity through showing benefits from being active and counteracting disperse of responsibility;
- The initiative - groups should be equalizing knowledge and practical skills needed for active participation among all age-groups, promoting dialogue as a method of disputes resolving and widening the voluntary work understanding;
- Cooperation and dialogue should be built for diminishing the tensions appearing, for fast handling the conflict situations and fast resolving of the disputable issues between the public authorities and the citizens;
- Inter - sectorial approach should be promoted, cooperation between the public authorities, the initiative - groups and the citizens should be the subject of cooperation and dialogue.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTRODUCING INCENTIVES FOR BECOMING ACTIVE CITIZEN

- Promote exchanges and discussion within citizens: the opportunity to be one's self and to freely express personal opinions and thoughts;
- Foster the knowledge of English language;
- Support intermediary organizations/bodies within EU and citizens in order to promote proximity and encouraging grassroots participation;
- Promote established meetings between citizens in order to promote information and active participation;
- Foster awareness of citizens concerning EU topics and cultures within schools and media communication;
- Encourage local information and support actions about training and job opportunities at European level;
- Promote positive competition, as incentives for citizens to improve and activate themselves.
- Informing and encouraging for participation should be promoted through multiple channels; civic education should be accessible through schooling and local leaders should get support and recognition;
- Both politicians, schools, local leaders, parents and volunteers should encourage to democratic activity;
- Information should be easily accessible in all the places where people spend their time, also in the entertainment context;
- The youth groups potential should be capitalized – as information transmitters, opinions leaders, encouraging to take initiatives, involving yet uninvolved peers;
- Benefits of being active should be widely promoted, good practices presented;
- The politicians and decision makers should be supportive to civic initiatives, accessible and hold responsible for their promises;
- More “hard” (sports halls, offices available for NGOs, local community centres) and “soft” infrastructure (grant competitions for civil society organisations; access to new technologies, more effectively applied direct democracy tools) for civic activity should be accessible.



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INTERNATIONAL CITIZENS FORUM

GOAL. To develop - on the basis of all the results gathered - recommendations for relevant European Union's and National Institutions/ Organisations/ Authorities - that, if introduced, could increase the citizens' participation in the democratic life.

METHODOLOGY. The Forum took place in Nicosia, Cyprus in October 15-17, 2015 with 25 citizens from different European countries participating.

Before the International Citizens Forum, there was an invitation to contribute ideas in regards to civic engagement and participation announced by using Idea Prism, a mobile application (free of charge) specifically designed to enable on-line participation. The ideas gathered were then presented during the International Citizens Forum.

The Forum was implemented using the Structured Dialogic Design Process (SDDP) methodology. Participants were asked to respond to a 'triggering question' - which is the main question of the co-laboratory around which at the following discussions are focused:

What changes should be introduced to encourage democratic engagement and participation in the democratic processes?

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote the idea that civic involvement promotes social intelligence.
- Develop "Centers for training civic leaders".
- Compulsory disclosure of positions and funding sources of lobbyists.
- Live coverage (TV, Web) of parliamentary discussions.
- Strengthen and support independent media.
- More support to NGOs.

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FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL. To give suggestions on active democratic participation of the EU citizens.

METHODOLOGY. The project team considers that raising awareness on a phenomenon as the democratic participation in EU, is one of the most important steps in order to create solutions at the European level for democratic duties and challenges. Informing citizens, Authorities and Organizations on the dimensions of active citizenship as well as on ways to promote it, it is a step forward towards the settle in of democratic life activities. The list of recommendation was sent to the EU Parliament Members, the European Commission Representation, the European Ombudsman, National Parliament members and other wide public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Enable the steps that would strengthen the link between social intelligence and civic participation.
2) Focus on creating centers for training civic leaders and thus addressing the need of people to be more informed about civic engagement.
3) Making the process of the decision on public matters taking more transparent, by disclosing the positions and funding sources of lobbyists.
4) Promoting independent thinking and limiting media propaganda by promoting the idea of having live coverage (TV, Web) of parliamentary discussions.
5) Strengthen and support independent media.
6) Strengthen the importance of Non-governmental Organizations and thus making them an internal part of the governing process.

By making progress in the above mentioned areas we will be able to tackle the roots of limited participation in the democratic processes and achieve changes in many other areas enhancing active citizenship, such as:

- Developing legislation to protect active citizenship from political pressures;
- Making participation appealing by using marketing tools and rewards;
- Creating more mechanisms for effective accountability;
- Creating more bottom-up channels for active participation;
- Integrating simulation of active participation and experiential civic education throughout schooling;
- Ensuring equal representation of all age groups in politics; better accessibility of information;
- Showing the benefits of being active: funding political campaigns only through controlled crowd-funding;
- Introducing loose forms of direct democracy with the use of technology;
- Creating on-line platforms that enhance interactions and questions between citizens and politicians;
- Protecting and promoting freedom of speech.

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CONTACTS

The project team is still interested in the project topics and involved at Local, National and EU level in order to develop the project results in other future projects.

For contacts and further information:

Project's e-mail: **contact@letsgetactive.eu**

The „Let's get active!” coordinator:

Agnieszka Dadak

Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives, Bielsko-Biała, **Poland**

E-mail: faie@fundacjaie.eu

Phone: +48 511 551 439

Partner's coordinators:

Maria Georgiou

Future World's Centre, Nicosia, **Cyprus**

E-mail: maria.georgiou@cnti.org.cy

Phone: +357 22 873 820

Mihaela Bolohan

Asociatia EuroDEMOS, Iasi, **Romania**

E-mail: eurodemos_mihaela@yahoo.com

Phone: +40 720 728 953

Romina Boraso

Cooperativa Sociale COOSS MARCHE ONLUS scpa, Ancona, **Italy**

E-mail: ricerca25@cooss.marche.it

Phone: + 39 07 150 103 1



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