

CULTURE UNDER THE LENS

Building Key Competences of Young People
for Active Citizenship

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS BOOKLET



Co-funded by
the European Union



CUL

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the result of the youth exchange *Culture Under the Lens: Building Key Competences of Young People for Active Citizenship*, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project brought together young people from diverse backgrounds to explore the power of media, identity, and civic engagement—while equipping them with the tools to speak up, take action, and shape the narratives that define our societies.

In today's digital age, dominated by media, news, and pop culture, the ways in which we understand the world are increasingly shaped by the content we consume. While most young people in Europe are highly active online, only a small percentage possess the digital competencies needed to critically evaluate the information they encounter. The *Culture Under the Lens* project was designed to respond to this challenge. It empowers young people to question media representations, engage in intercultural dialogue, and adopt a mindset rooted in hope, creativity, and constructive change.

The project addresses the complex landscape of misinformation and pop culture through two international youth exchanges and an online mentoring phase. During the first exchange, participants explored the influence of media on their perceptions and identities. They reflected on harmful trends, identified issues that resonate with them, and created short videos that reinterpreted media narratives with cultural awareness and critical insight. These reflections became the foundation for their digital advocacy campaigns. Between exchanges, participants joined a mentoring program to develop their campaigns further, receive support, and share knowledge and resources. In the second exchange, new participants joined, and young people exchanged insights on strengths and challenges, created further advocacy campaigns, and compiled their results into this final booklet.

This publication presents a collection of those advocacy campaigns, showcasing purpose, message, creative outputs, and next steps. It's a space that reflects what has been created, communicates what matters most, and encourages others to join the journey.

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CRYPTORIA

fighting loneliness in modern society

Our motto:



DON'T SUFFER
ALONE

What drives us:

How can we create emotionally safe spaces where people feel understood, accepted, and free to express their feelings without fear of judgment?

What do we want to achieve:

We want to build communities where young people feel safe to express their feelings, be truly heard, and know they are not alone. By creating emotionally safe spaces, we reduce loneliness, build trust, and empower youth to support one another.

This matters to us because talking about emotions reduces stigma and encourages empathy among peers.

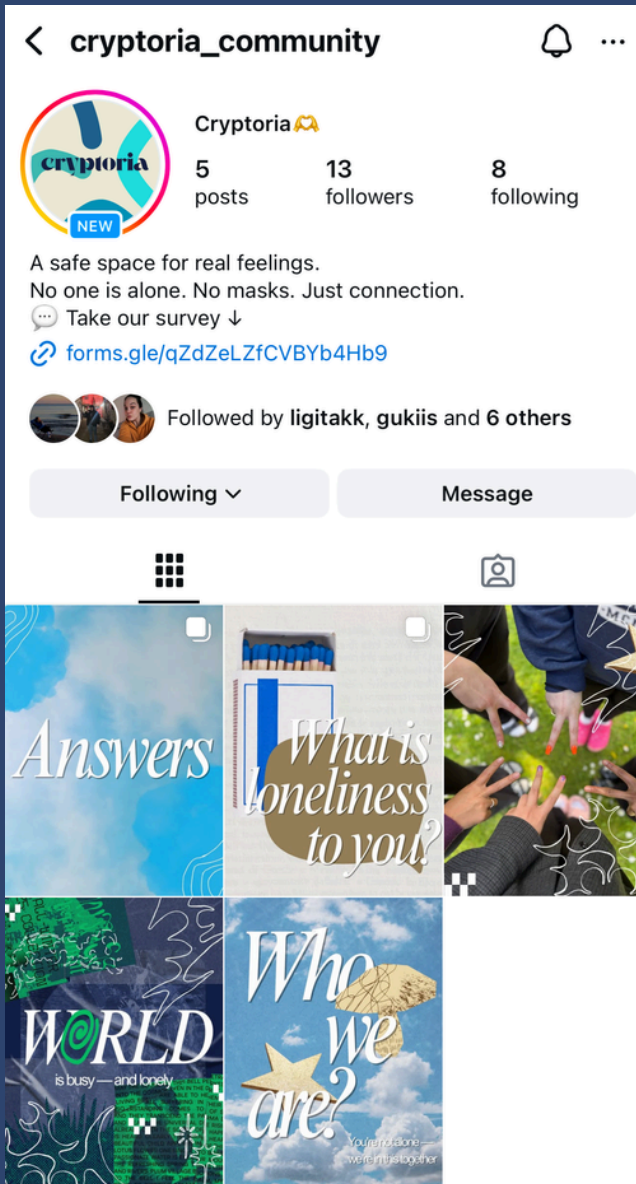
Who could benefit from our community?

Teenagers and young people;
Youth workers, teachers, and psychologists;
Parents and caregivers;
Schools, youth centers, camps, and
community organizations

Our solution:

- Utilize Instagram for a better purpose - a way to create a safe community for people to connect and support each other;
- Disseminate a survey to assess the needs of our community;
- Invite those that have gone through the survey to a private online community;
- Utilize the Instagram page to promote support.

CREATE AN INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT



DEVELOP A SURVEY TO ASSESS NEEDS

Cryptoria - feel free to speak

This survey seeks information about how young people feel about their lives, mental health, social media impact, and sense of community.

We hope you feel safe sharing your personal and honest feelings about these hard topics. It's very important that you take your time to think about these questions. With your help, we can create a safe and supportive community!

*Information you share will be anonymous.



JOIN US ON INSTAGRAM



ANSWER TO OUR SURVEY HERE

*It's when you have
so much to say, but
no one to say it to.*

*Loneliness for me is when I
look around and don't see
anyone I can talk to.*

What is loneliness to you?

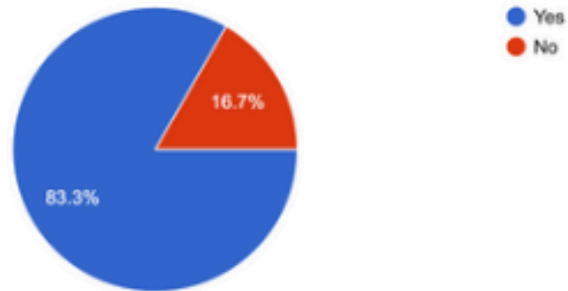
**Analyse
responses
and share
them online,
with the
purpose of
bringing
people
together.**

*Disconnection,
isolation,
emptiness.*

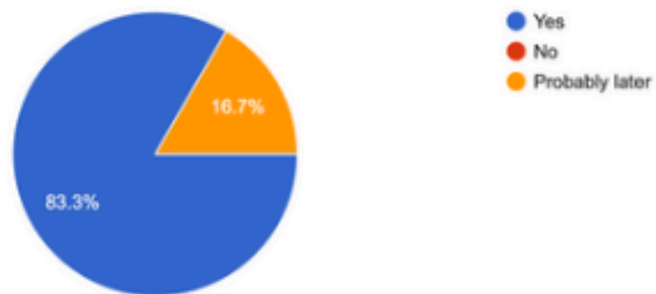
*It's like scrolling
through your phone,
hoping someone
messed — but no one
did.*

Understand the needs of our community and tailor the approach to them

Do people in your environment (family, friends, colleagues) talk about emotions?



Would you like to join a safe community where you can share your true feelings?



INVITE THE COMMUNITY FOR A MEET-UP



A social media post from the Cryptoria community. The post features a white card with a gold brushstroke at the top right and blue watercolor clouds at the bottom. The card contains the following text: '@Cryptoria_community', 'Create safe space for everyone', 'CRYPTORIA FIRST MEETING', '123 District of Safety', '30.05.2025', 'Five o'clock in the afternoon', and 'Be free to come and share your feelings!'. The background of the post shows a person's hands clasped in prayer, with their face obscured by the clouds.

 cryptoria_community ...

 @Cryptoria_community

Create safe space for everyone

CRYPTORIA FIRST MEETING

 *123 District of Safety*

 *30.05.2025*

 *Five o'clock in the afternoon*

 *Be free to come and share your feelings!*

Tips for organizing a safer space for emotional connection and vulnerability, with young people:

- Build trust first
- Use creative expression
- The emotional tone should be of a hopeful one
- Set clear group rules
- Let youth lead
- Train facilitators well
- Have a calm/quiet zone
- Ask open, reflective questions
- Mix deep and light activities
- Encourage peer support

What would success be:

” Being able to support people who join our community.



Next steps:

Grow the community and try to reach out to people in other countries who are also in need of this kind of support.



Others can get involved and support us by spreading the word about our community, actively participating, and empathizing with members.

This is an initiative created by Daniela Núñez, Samanta Pėželytė, Gaudvilė Ščervianinaitė, Ugnė Šmailytė and Rizza Canullas.

RAISING EMPATHY

Everyone has a story

This video features young people sharing powerful stories about individuals who may appear happy on the surface but are silently dealing with challenges like assault, racism, and discrimination. Through these narratives, we aim to raise awareness about hidden struggles and the importance of empathy. Join us in uncovering the truth behind the smiles and standing together for understanding and support

” **NOT EVERYTHING IS AS IT SEEMS.**



[Click here](#)



This is an initiative created by Viktorija Montvydaitė; Angeliki Sofikitou; Saulius Jeruslanovas; Eleni Markoulaki; and Ričardas Pranculis

Young People

THE NEED FOR A UNITED FUTURE

In a world divided by differences, this video explores the power of collective action and teamwork.

Through close-up interviews with young people from diverse ethnicities, educational backgrounds, and life experiences, we discuss the importance of setting aside our differences to work toward a better future.

Using the metaphor of a crashed plane to symbolize what happens when we fail to collaborate, the video highlights both the challenges and rewards of unity.



[CLICK HERE](#)



The stories shared reveal how perspectives are shaped in a generation—and how digital advocacy and youth programs can bridge these gaps. Together, we can create a society built on inclusion, cultural appreciation, and collective effort.

”
**LET’S WORK
TOGETHER**

”
**LET’S TAKE
ACTION**

This is an initiative created by Norma Cechaviciute; Joseph Augustine; Georgia Tsapali and Leandro Franco.

Young people's addiction to social media

What drives us:

This phenomenon has spread in society to every household. Our main objective is to raise awareness about the problem itself. Do young people even realize how much time they spend on social media?

Who could benefit?

Everyone, but our main focus is on the younger generations, who use social media with higher frequency.

” Our motto:
Right use,
less abuse.

What do we want to achieve:

Everyone can help in solving the problem: We just need to spend less time on social media and try to recognize the harm it can do.

Our solution: We asked young people about their usage of social media



[Watch our video](#)



This campaign taught me that we need to be more careful when we use social media

Next steps:

It is necessary to organize special programs in schools on the risks of social media and the benefits of media literacy skills

This is an initiative created by Aikaterini- Konstantina Kafourou; Georgios Xenikos; Vasileios Tsantouris; and Michaela Matsia

ABSENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY

Propaganda & Manipulation

What drives us:

Most people do not know how to filter information; there is a general lack of critical thinking skills and a tendency to blindly follow media outlets.

Our motto:

“Think before
you click”

Who could benefit?

Vulnerable groups in society, especially pensioners, children and teenagers; but in general, it is a huge problem for everyone.

What do we want to achieve:

We want to teach people to recognize and resist manipulation in order to preserve their mental and physical health.

Our campaign intersects with critical issues, permeating all spheres of life; therefore, this type of education must be implemented.

”

Turn on
your brain

**True freedom
comes when
you think for
yourself!**

© Anna, John, Lada

**Our solution: Workshops about media literacy,
fake news, propaganda, and types of
manipulation**



Let's play kahoot!





By using these cards with examples of different types of manipulation being used in the news, we brainstorm with young people how to spot fake news

Next steps:

A one-year program where young people can engage in different workshops in which they are tasked with spotting 5 pieces of fake news and explaining why they're fake.



This is an initiative created by Volodymyra Noskova; Yevhenii Ferdina; and Anna Marchenko

IMPERIALISM ENDS WITH US

What drives us:

We're challenging modern imperialism — how powerful nations exploit weaker ones through economic, military, and political dominance.

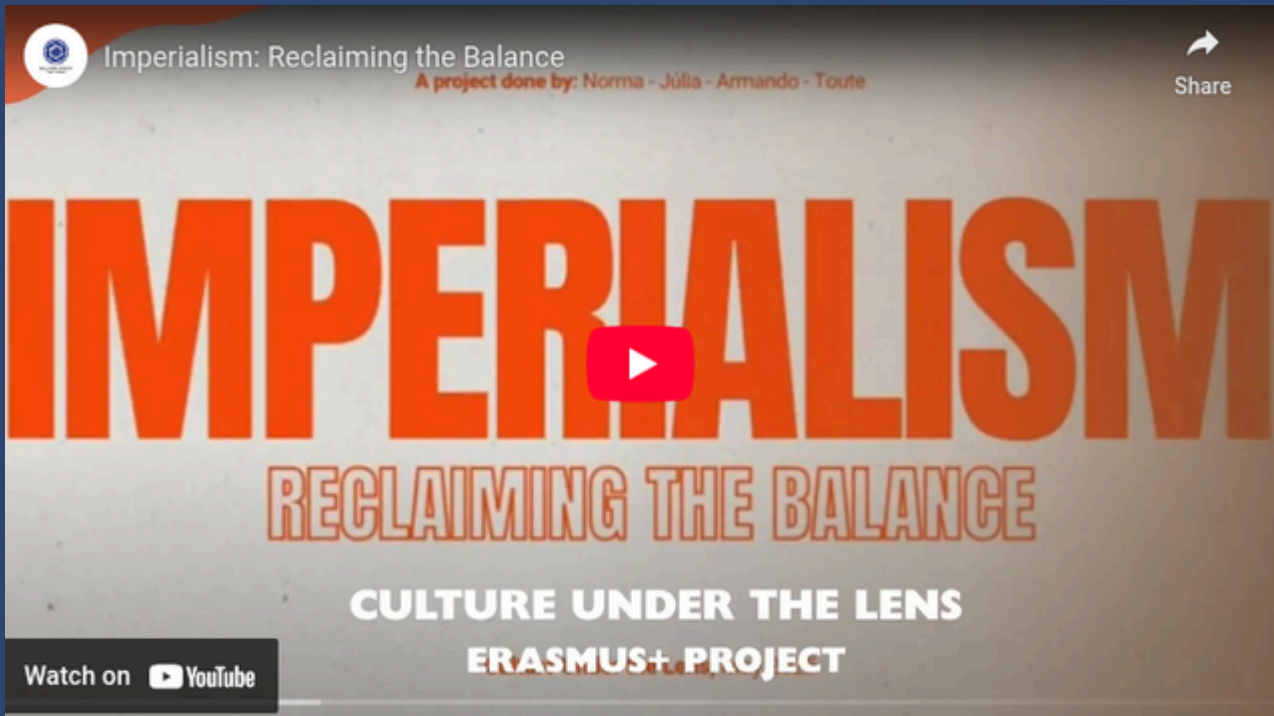
We believe in justice, equality, sovereignty, resistance, solidarity, decolonization, and dignity for all people.

” **Our motto:**
Equal distribution,
equal evolution

What do we want to achieve:

We seek a world rooted in peace and equal opportunity — where no nation dominates another, and every community has the right to thrive with dignity and self-determination

Our solution: Your voices matter — and we brought them together in a short video to highlight real opinions on imperialism.



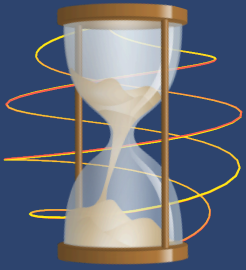
Next steps:

Continue to highlight these efforts to empower young people to speak up against imperialism

[Check the video here](#)



This is an initiative created by Norma Cechaviciute; Júlia Guivernau; Armando Radaci; and Tautė Baranauskaitė



Democracy Fading

You need democracy like you need water

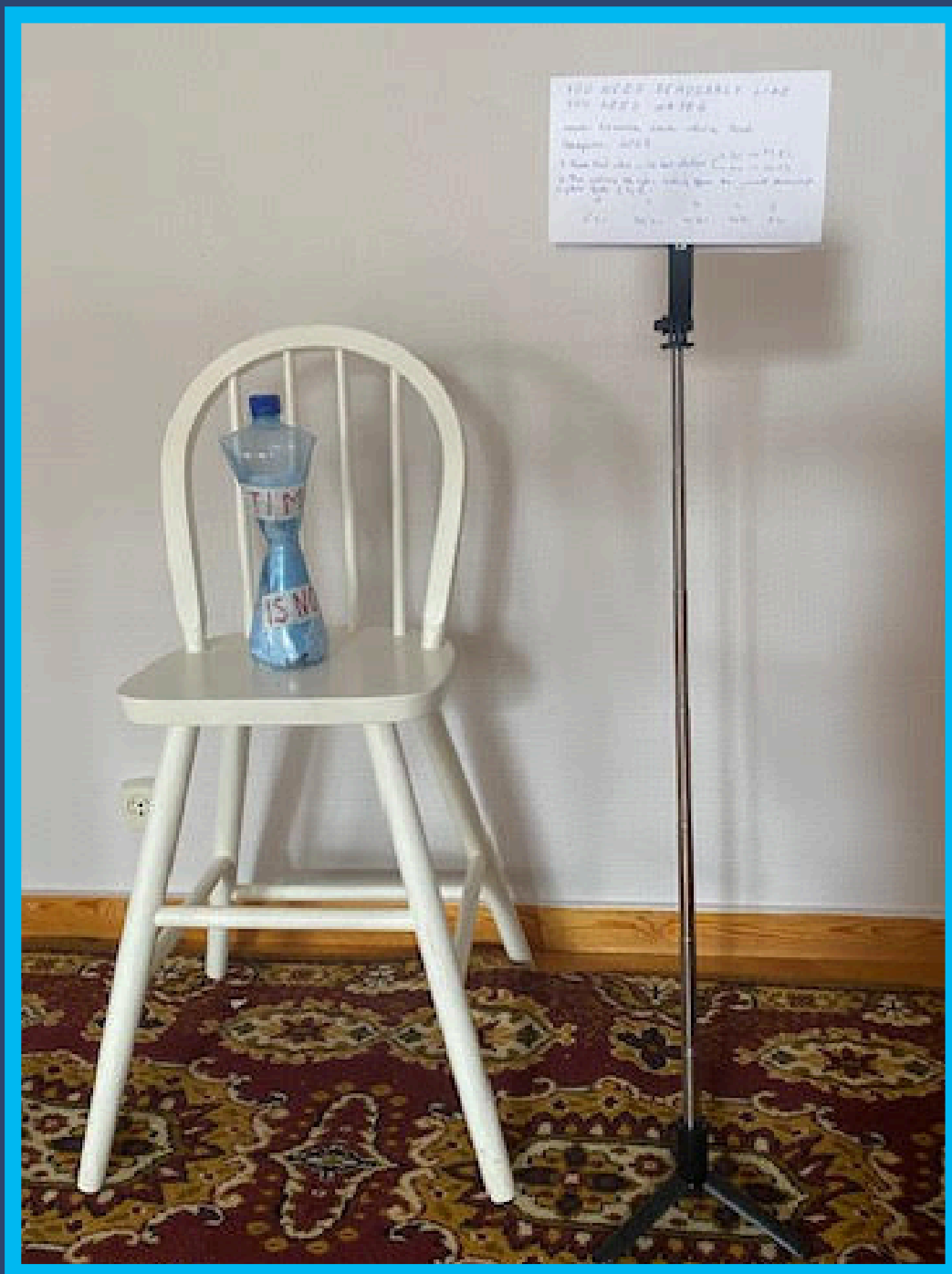
We are facing the fading of democracy along with an increased mistrust in the current political system.

Global surveys reveal a growing disillusionment with democracy (particularly among younger generations). While democracy promises representation, freedom, and accountability, many young people now see democratic systems as stagnant, corrupt, or disconnected from urgent social and environmental issues.

We would like to start a safe space where:
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
COOPERATION
EMPATHY
PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
FREEDOM OF SPEECH
can be learned, discussed and critically looked at.

WE WANT TO REVERSE THIS CURRENT TREND AND GET MORE YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED

You need democracy like you need water



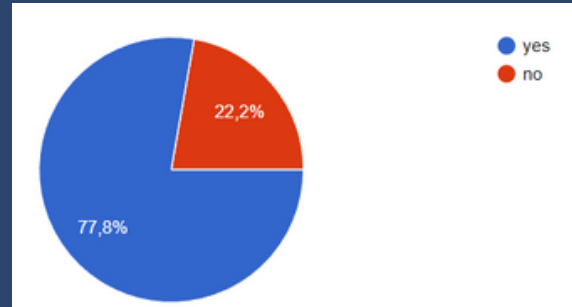
ON-SITE ART INSTALLATION

Survey Results



**WE DID A SURVEY ON OUR GROUP
(20 ANSWERS, FROM 18-30 YEAR OLD)**

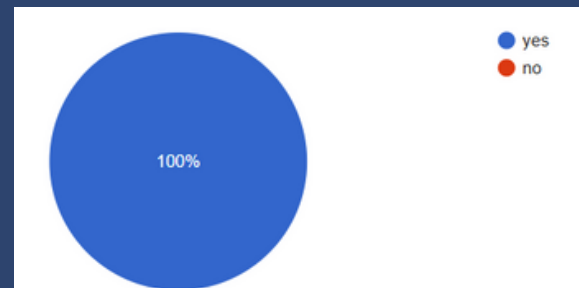
• DID YOU VOTE IN YOUR LAST NATIONAL ELECTIONS?



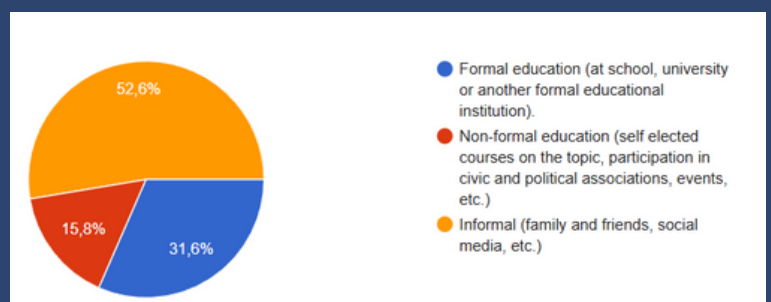
• RATE YOUR BELIEF IN THE CURRENT DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM FROM 1 TO 5:



• DO YOU THINK EUROPEAN UNION IS GOOD FOR YOUR COUNTRY?



• WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE MAIN SOURCE OF YOUR POLITICAL EDUCATION?



[CLICK HERE](#)

**WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO, BUT
WITH MORE PARTICIPATION AND INTEREST
WE THINK WE CAN GET EVERYONE INVOLVED.
IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR
SURVEY JUST CLICK THE LINK:**



YOUR OPINIONS MATTER; DEMOCRACY STARTS NOW:



[YOU CAN ALSO CHECK IT HERE](#)



KEY POINTS FROM OUR PROJECT:

- **AWARENESS AND ADVANTAGES OF DEMOCRACY**
- **ADVISE FROM NON-DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES**
- **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**
- **IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY**
- **BUILDING FROM BOTTOM-UP**

TESTIMONY FROM OUR TEAM MEMBER:

JORDI: ‘DEMOCRACY WORKS BEST WHEN PEOPLE ACTUALLY KNOW WHAT IT’S ABOUT AND GET INVOLVED. ONE OF THE BIGGEST PERKS IS THAT EVERYONE GETS A SAY AND CAN HOLD LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE. WHEN YOU’RE AWARE OF HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS AND ACTUALLY TAKE PART—VOTING, SPEAKING UP, ORGANIZING—IT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE. IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT POLITICS, IT’S ABOUT STANDING UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS AND YOUR COMMUNITY.

LOOKING AT COUNTRIES THAT AREN’T DEMOCRATIC REALLY SHOWS HOW IMPORTANT FREEDOM AND PARTICIPATION ARE. WHEN DECISIONS ONLY COME FROM THE TOP, PEOPLE GET SHUT OUT. THAT’S WHY BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES FROM THE GROUND UP MATTERS SO MUCH. REAL CHANGE STARTS LOCAL—WHEN WE COME TOGETHER, STAY INFORMED, AND PUSH FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE IN, WE’RE SHAPING A FUTURE THAT ACTUALLY WORKS FOR US!’

NEXT STEPS:

- BUILD LOCAL COMMUNITIES**
- START A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN WITH HASHTAG #SAVEDEMOCRACY**

This is an initiative created by Romina Cingolani; Gara Gadea; Jordi Garrigós; and Olivia Mekionis

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER

We want to:

- Create a safe space for people all over the world to open up, express themselves in any way they want;
- Show people that freedom is non-negotiable;
- Use our platform to educate people about freedom: we want to show examples from different countries, cultures, etc.

Freedom is not only a word which describes that we are free for example in our country, it's a word that connects us in all aspects of life: we all are different but we all must be equal in all aspects of life.

People must have freedom in their countries, they must have freedom of speech, freedom to express themselves, freedom to believe in what they want to believe.

Sometimes people are scared of expressing themselves. We cannot see what is happening inside other countries; we mainly focus on only our culture, but we must be in touch with everybody.

[Click here](#)



This is an initiative created by Bárbara Pedrosa; Sofia Carvalho; Júlia Guivernau; Sevasti Armpounioti; and Kamilė Rauktytė.

TOGETHER 4 HER

FIGHTING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE



Together 4 HER was created to raise awareness about violence and discrimination against women. It is everyone's problem, so let's get together; it's time to change!

Our core values are gender equality and equity, women's rights, victim's help and protection.



We want to spread the message that we all need to prevent violence against women by raising awareness about this overwhelming problem.



ACTIONS

Posters with statements about Violence and discrimination of women + QR Code which leads people to Facebook page where people can talk it.



Together 4 HER

One in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15

source: UN Women

Together 4 HER

Today, more than 200 million girls and women alive worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation

source: European comission



TOGETHER 4 HER

Together for HER
2 likes • 2 followers

Publications On Mentions Criticism Followers Photos More

Presentation

We are just people who want to help people. This is a safe place for you to vent with others who have relatable experiences. Please feel free to speak out your mind. Helpline list: <https://wave-network.org/list-of-helplines-in-46-countries/>

Publications

Together for HER
2 d

Facebook group - A safe space to talk about problems, denounce situations and find support



A video: Here we can find out through real people's experiences what still needs to be changed and why. What do people really think about women's rights? Women and men share their thoughts on gender equality, addressing the challenges and progress made so far. Through open and honest conversations, we explore perspectives on how women's rights are understood and valued in today's society. As the discussion unfolds, the video concludes with eye-opening statistics and data, highlighting the inequalities that persist globally.

[Click here](#)





A podcast

Linda's Interview: An Indian woman who is a volunteer Goodness of People NGO and that has rescued women from Indian brothels



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)



Leo's testimonial is about how he has seen many cases of violence against women in Spain, and he feels that he needs to do something to help and speak out.

What do we want to achieve:

Women feeling safe everywhere

**Empowering people to speak out about cases of violence against women;
Turning the facebook page into a real digital support community.**

”

“MEN SHOULD SUPPORT WOMEN”

”

“WOMEN DON'T DESERVE BAD TREATMENT FROM MEN”

Next steps:

Create a real-life meet up with the Facebook community; Produce more podcasts and upload them on spotify.



This is an initiative created by Sofia Matoso; Mariia Sydorenko; Daria Rovna; Sofia Vladymyrova; Leandro Franco; and Yeva Rudenko.

Let's Talk About It

SEXUAL HEALTH STARTS WITH OPEN CONVERSATIONS

HOW CAN WE BETTER SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN IT COMES TO SEXUAL HEALTH?

This video captures honest conversations as young women ask their peers about the challenges they face and the support they wish they had. The responses highlight the importance of breaking the stigma around sexual health and encouraging open dialogue—at home, in schools, and across society. Let's start the conversation and make sexual health education and support accessible for everyone.

[CLICK HERE](#)



This is an initiative created by Melania Velasco; Athanasia Tsirikosmaoglou; Kamilė Vaiciukevičiūtė; Valentina Cárdenas; and Camila Solari.

MENTORING PROGRAM

Between the two youth exchanges, participants engaged in a structured online mentoring program to develop, refine, and implement their digital advocacy campaigns. This phase played a vital role in transforming initial ideas into action by offering regular support, skill-building, and reflection opportunities.

The mentoring program included:

- Check-in sessions with each group to track progress and clarify their campaign goals
- Feedback and guidance from facilitators and peers to improve creative outputs
- Access to digital tools, templates, and practical tips for outreach and storytelling
- Space for collaborative decision-making, where participants took ownership of their timelines and campaign strategies

Each group was encouraged to define their own working rhythm while receiving tailored support in areas such as visual communication, online safety, social media engagement, and campaign messaging.

The program also fostered a sense of community across borders, as participants inspired one another, exchanged ideas, and stayed motivated through regular contact and shared purpose.

CONCLUSION

This booklet celebrates the voices and actions of young people and stands as a testament to the power of youth-led advocacy and creative civic participation.

What we have witnessed throughout this project is that when young people are given the tools, the space, and the support to reflect on the world around them - and on the issues they care about - something powerful happens. They delve deep into complex challenges, question dominant narratives, and begin to articulate bold, values-driven responses. Their energy transforms into action, their concern into commitment.

The campaigns presented here are more than learning outcomes - they are snapshots of what moves this generation: the causes they rally behind, the injustices they question, the hopes they carry, and the visions they are eager to build. These pages offer a glimpse into the mindset of young people when they are empowered to think critically, collaborate meaningfully, and create purposefully.

Their motivation, activation, and sense of ownership reveal what is possible when we trust young people not just as participants, but as changemakers, capable of shaping the present and the future. Let this booklet serve not only as documentation of a project, but as an invitation - to listen, to support, and to stand alongside youth as they lead the way toward a more just, inclusive, and creative society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project “Culture Under the Lens: Building Key Competences of Young People for Active Citizenship” (Project No. 2024-1-SE02-KA152-YOU-000231112) is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and carried out in close cooperation across five countries: Sweden, Portugal, Lithuania, Greece, and Spain.

We would like to thank all partner organizations for their commitment, collaboration, and dedication to empowering young people through creative civic participation.

Special thanks go to the facilitators who guided and supported the participants throughout the learning journey: Mariana Matoso and Vladislav Artiukhiov.

We are also grateful for the collaboration with Fatima Azadli and Mariana Fonseca during the mentoring program. Your insights and expertise have brought new power to this program.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to the coordinators and local hosts, Benita Venckuvienė and Nerijus Venckus, for their generous support, care, and dedication in creating a welcoming and meaningful environment for this youth exchange.

Finally, thank you to all the participants, whose energy, creativity, and commitment transformed this project into an example of youth-led activism and engagement.

CONTACTS



Goodness of People / Sweden

Amazing Youth / Greece

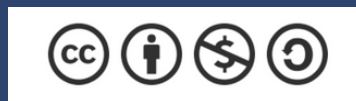
Fedelatina / Spain

Sostinės vaikų ir jaunimo centras /
Lithuania

Associação Fortes Sempre /
Portugal

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS BOOKLET

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Edited by Mariana Matoso



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