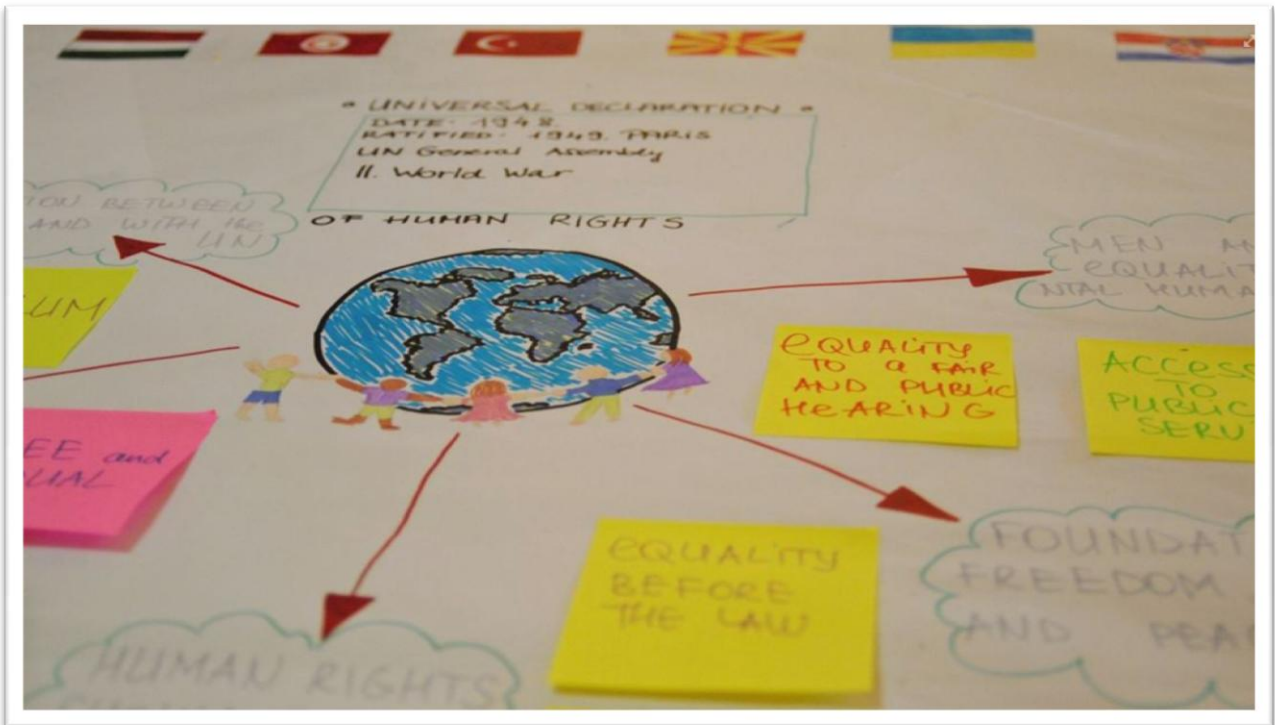


Training course 70 years of peace and growth

GUIDE FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP FOR ORGANISATIONS



In July 2015, in Konstancin-Jeziorna in Poland, 33 youth workers from 11 countries gathered to explore the topic deeper and compare the situation with the young people in EU the neighboring countries. During the 7 days spent together we discovered a lot, spoke about the problems we are facing in our countries, the obstacles the young people have to overcome that prevent them to be active citizens.

In this guide we combined the experience and the best practices from all the organisations participating in the training, and the participants personally, their point of view and the experience of working with young people. We realized that many of our countries share the same problems, and that most of the young people are not motivated because of similar reasons, which are listed in the following part.



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Having organisations and youth workers from Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, Macedonia, Romania, Croatia, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Turkey and Ukraine, we covered huge area of EU and partner countries, analyzing the nature of the problems and the obstacles that the youth face in different regions and environments.

Reasons for not having active young people in our organisations

We defined several reasons that are in common for the countries participating, that influence the motivation of the young people or reduces it to a very low level, and the list is pretty long...



First of all, speaking from our own experience as members of associations and coordinators of activities, we never find it easy to involve many young people in our work, or mobilise groups for certain actions. Being self-critical, the participants agreed that the associations are not doing enough to promote their work and the results to the young people. There is a barrier between the activities of the associations, and the young people in our communities, or in most of it. They are not familiar with what the organisations do, and in some countries the NGO sector is being promoted as “those who work against the national interests” and money laundries for the foreign foundations. In countries like Macedonia, Ukraine, Hungary and Turkey, the NGO sector is leading the LGBT campaigns or assisting the organisation and the financing, and is the main responsible for Sexual and STD education, and promotion and protection of Human rights together with tolerance and



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transparency. That is however not accepted by everybody, and some of the organisations are seen as traitors and even groups organised against the governments...

This is affecting the work and the image of the NGO sector, where the youth organisations belong, and is discouraging the young people to take part of their activities.

Volunteering in the time of big unemployment...

It is a problem to convince someone to volunteer and not to be able to promise them permanent work, as a graduate, looking for a job. Most of the young people in our countries hardly find decent jobs after their education, and offering volunteering opportunities can be welcomed, but also not that attractive for them.

There were different examples from the organisations participating in the training. However, if the volunteering is interesting, involves traveling and improving the CV, most of the young people agree to volunteer for a certain period before getting back to job search, or meanwhile.



What to do...

As organisations, we need to promote this opportunities for self-development, but also for contribution to the organisation and the society with the actions. EVS from Erasmus+ is a great for EU and non-EU citizens, but the volunteering doesn't need to be international and expensive,

because there are lot of young people with great knowledge, motivation and lack of experience even in the neighborhood. Organising one football match in the schools is teaching people about leadership, organizational skills, responsibilities, time management, fundraising, teamwork. As long as we are creative and provide them with what is interesting to them, it is not hard to involve bigger group, and those events are perfect for promotion of other, less interesting activities.

GET INVOLVED

Positive example...

Having a group of young people we permanently work with can be another advantage for the both sides. The Macedonian Anti-poverty Platform has started its youth programme only 2 years ago, aiming for providing opportunities for self-development of the less socially and economically advantaged young



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people in Macedonia. So MAPP has provided chance to more than 50 young people who cannot afford to travel abroad, to go to another country for a Erasmus+ mobility, meeting new people, participating actively in the exchanges, practicing their English, gaining priceless experience... However, the story doesn't finish here, but they still work with more than half of this people on small projects in Macedonia. The programme is developing and involving more than 30 members, who participate in the conferences the Platform is organizing, as part of the organizational team, and are also promoting the Youth Activism at concerts and other big events, where they are considered as staff and get free access, covered costs and chances to meet successful people and learn something from them. MAPP is establishing cooperation with some municipalities to provide space for meeting in Skopje, and turn it in to youth center where they can bring even more people to spend their time more productively and learn something new.



Pictures of the camp MAPP participated in during the concert at Doiran Lake in Macedonia. The members promoted the programme and the whole work of MAPP in the field of social policies.

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This tells us...

The organisations need to create strategy for working with young people. MAPP is not primarily a youth organisation, but still has the best practice for working with young people, so the creative approach and advanced planning of activities that will keep them motivated and present in the organisation to a moment when they will fill as a part of it, are essential for having them active. It is always welcome to cooperate with other sectors with the activities we have, and get support or provide support for easier realization of the envisaged plans.

Our rights... and do we know them?

Although we have the most advanced Charter for human rights as European citizens, and have rights granted and protected, not a lot of young people know their rights. According to a survey endorsed by the European Commission, in 2012, 54% of the EU citizens were not fully aware of their rights. This number reduced with in 2013, which was the year of European citizenship and many projects addressed this issue, but there is still great number of young people who are not well informed about their rights as European Citizens, or what to expect as citizens of a candidate country.

This percent is much higher among the young people, and we can act as a bridge connection between them and the institutions, to ensure they become aware that the EU citizenship is not a concept only, but it is a practical reality that brings tangible benefits to citizens.



The charter for Human right of the European Union that every citizen should know

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

All the treaties of EU in one place

http://europa.eu/eu-law/decision-making/treaties/index_en.htm



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We asked the locals how active they are and how much do they know...



It is not that easy to think of how to be more active citizens when asked at the streets, out of the blue. The people we interviewed in Warsaw mostly connected the active citizenship with voting at the elections, but when asked what else, they couldn't remember what can also be done to more active. Some know more, some less, and usually the young people are those who do not know much, but however, still they consider themselves active. 😊



What can we do to be even more active on EU level?

Apply for a grant and deliver a project from Europe for citizens programme as an organisation
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme/action1_en.php

As a citizen... The European citizens' initiative allows one million EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies, by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal. If you have something to change, start your own initiative...
<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome?!g=en>



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Step up – act on your own! European Parliament – Written Declarations

1. Find at least 5 Members of the European Parliament;
2. Register a motion/declaration
3. Find at least 300 supporters for it among MEPs

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/written-declarations.html>



We believe in the potential of the young people, and investing in the youth is investing in the future of one country and EU. We encourage the young people to raise their voice, to have it heard, and participate in the decision making process on a local, regional, national and EU level. By providing conditions for the young people to be able to actively participate, the institutions and the countries are opening their doors for fresh ideas, creative solutions and new energy. At this time of crisis, political and economic, everybody's opinion and contribution is important, and it's our task to make it possible.

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- **UNIMEL– Spain,**
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Done at Poland, July 2015