

Europe for Citizens: Strand2: Democratic engagement and civic participation

**Act Locally, Think Internationally.
Union (S)Elections**

Deadline for expression of interest: 23rd of August

IDEA

More than half century ago, six countries initiated a perpetual process of unification of a – destroyed by the two World Wars – Europe. What started as the **European Coal and Steel Community** with Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands and West Germany, now is a European Union (from now on EU) of 28 member states.

Despite the impressive expansion in geographic terms, the EU seems that needs a lot of effort to achieve the active participation of its citizens in the policy-making process. Indicative of this, is the 43% of participation in the recent elections for the European Parliament, which – by the way – is a positive outcome since it seems that it is the first time since the first elections, back in 1979, that we have a higher turnout.

This observation can probably lead to many kinds of conclusions. Nevertheless, the reality is that EU citizens seem to consider EU as an external factor in their daily life, which in cases of – the so called – euroscepticism is an external factor that suppresses national identity. Consequently, millions of people can't see themselves as part of the EU, and therefore, they do not feel the need to participate in the decision making.

This project focuses on EU citizens and to citizens of the Candidate Countries, regardless of nationality, race, gender, age, sexual and other orientation, religion or any other possible discriminatory identity. What we seek to achieve working together with the potential participants is to provide them with space, time and tools for expressing their view of EU, and help them understand that EU is them. Thus, we will attempt to show them that acting locally and for the common good of their local communities, they can actually be thinking about the good of the wider European community, without needing to reconsider their local traditions.

The idea of the project is to motivate EU and Candidate Countries' citizens to think internationally while acting locally, to eventually (s)elect the EU they dream for them and for the future generations.

OBJECTIVES

- involve citizens of EU and Candidate Countries in activities directly linked to Union policies, with a view to give them an opportunity to concretely participate in the Union policy-making process;
- support the realization of debates both in local and international level, regarding policy proposals and other themes that are in the priorities for the locals;
- promote debates/campaigns/actions on themes of common interest;
- research the individual opinions of the citizens on EU citizenship/elections/policy making, favouring a bottom up approach (including the use of social networks, webinars, etc.) and media literacy.
- provide the participants with the opportunity to have their voice heard and their opinion taken in account, offering them access to EU decision making process.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

1. **December 2014:** KALAMATA, Greece: *Kick-off meeting*. Each partner will participate with one representative. K.A.N.E. (organizer of the meeting) will participate also with locals who want to be involved in the project. During the meeting we will define the objectives of and the strategies for the implementations of the activities, and the process to be followed throughout the project.
2. **January 2015-March 2015:** NATIONALLY: Researches in each partner country about the attitudes/tendencies and opinions of the EU and Candidate Countries' citizens towards the EU, the EU citizenship and the EU policies. The researches shall be conducted by professional social researchers and shall be designed in order to provide results that allow comparative analysis.
3. **April 2015:** ANY COUNTRY: International conference for presenting of the results of the researches in a meeting organized by any partner.
4. **April-May 2015:** Weekly in-country debates in the local communities regarding common interest themes. The themes will be decided by the partners according to the programme priorities during the kick-off meetings. One debate each month can discuss a subject decided by the participants of the debates.
5. **May 2015:** ANY COUNTRY: International seminar for interested people from the local communities of the partners (15 people per country/at least 3 per age category). The seminar will inform people about the possible ways for participating in the policy making process of the EU, and for the importance of active participation in local level for the well-being of the EU communities.
6. **June 2015:** Online debate with the participation of people from all the participant countries. The debate will decide for the realization of a 3-month campaign across the countries regarding a common interest issue.
7. **September-December 2015:** International campaign with actions in all the countries.
8. **January 2016:** ANY COUNTRY: International conference to present the campaign and its impact for the participants and the places where it was carried out.
9. **February-March 2016:** ONLINE: Preparation for founding a network of active citizens in the participating countries.
10. **April 2016:** KALAMATA, Greece: Establishment of the A.L.T.I.U.S. network. The members of the network will announce the end of the project.
11. **May 2016:** ANY COUNTRY: Last meeting of the partners. Discuss the results of the project, evaluate the project, discuss about possible future co-operation.

CALL FOR PARTNERS

- We are looking for partners from the EU member states and from the Candidate countries (Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey).
- Partners shall be registered in the EAC/EACEA Participant Portal and have their PIC number. We can help potential partners to register if they have not done it yet.

Partners' Responsibilities

- participate in the Kick-off meeting with one representative;
- organize and conduct the research in national level;
- present the results of the national research;
- organize and implement the in-country debates and campaign;
- prepare the participants for the online debate in June 2015;
- organize and support the participants for the online meetings between February and March 2016, for creating the A.L.T.I.U.S. network;
- participate in the last meeting with one representative;
- some of the partners shall organize and host: a. the presentation of the results of the researches in April 2015; b. the international seminar in May 2015; c. the international conference to present the campaign and its impact for the participants and the places where it was carried out, in January 2016; d. the last meeting of the partners in May 2016.