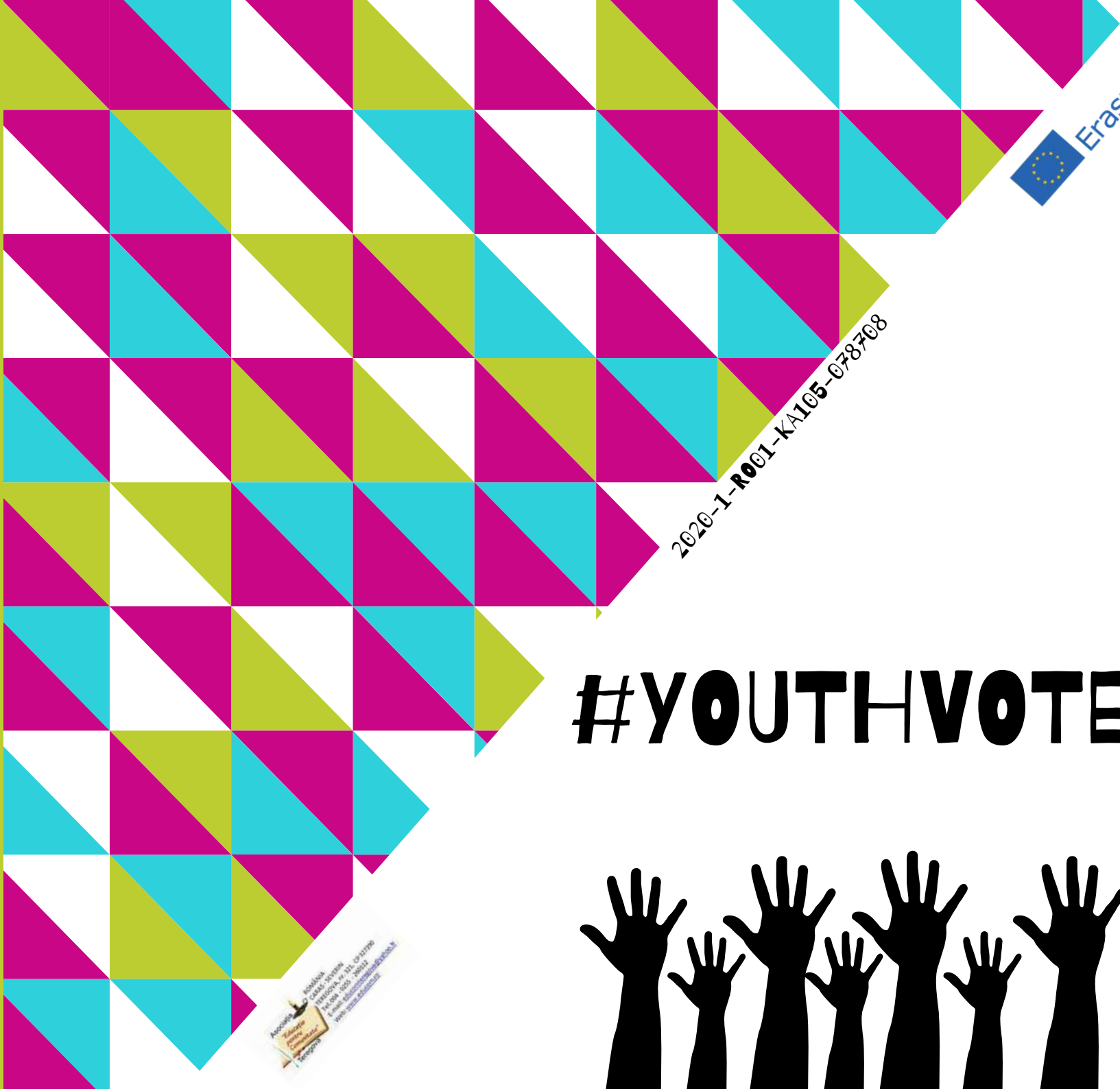


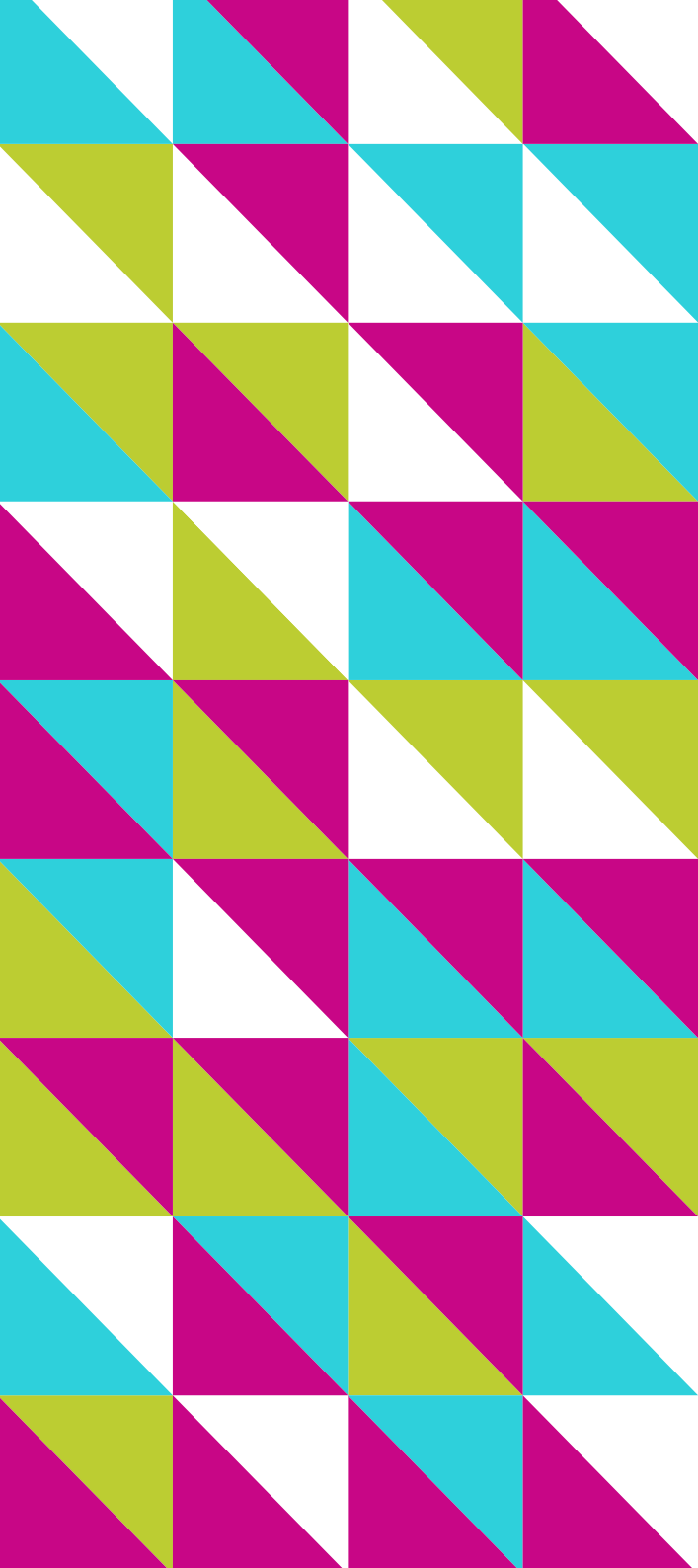
E-GUIDE



2020-1-R001-KA105-078708

#YOUTHVOTE





#YOUTHVOTE









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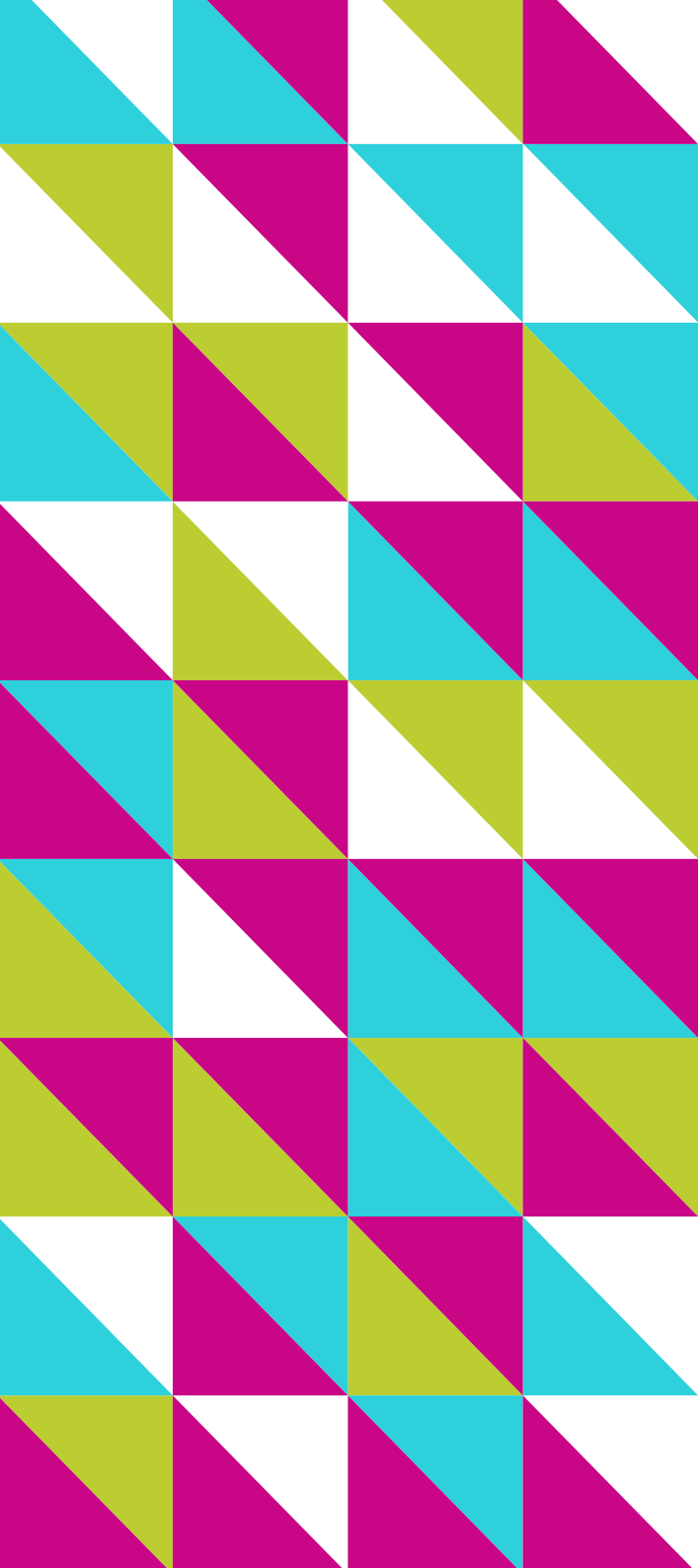
THE PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

2020-1-R001-KA105-078708



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#introduction

Our E-guide “#youthvote” was created during an Erasmus+ youth exchange of young people who are interested in topics such as active citizenship, youth involvement and voting. Each paragraph of the E-guide was written by the participants, involving information collected during the program, researched online, and reflecting on their ideas and opinions.

What is a youth exchange?

The program is running under Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission providing opportunities for young people to develop their skills and competences, gain knowledge in a certain topic, and to meet other young people from different countries.

Youth exchanges last between 5-21 days in which participants take part in non-formal educational activities, e.g. role plays, discussions, theatre, presentations, simulations etc. The activities are contributing to the participants' learning process and to develop them in the 8 key competences (established by the European Union).

The participants are coming from different countries (being part of groups of 5-16 people) and being between the age of 13-30 led by (a) group leader(s).

You can read more about [Erasmus+ Programme](#) and [Youth exchanges](#) by clicking on the links.

What is our youth exchange "*Rural youth vote!*" about?

The project was implemented in Brebu, Romania between 01-10 October 2021, organised by a Romanian organisation *Asociatia Educatie pentru Comunitate Teregova*. During the ten days of activities the participants learnt about active citizenship, youth involvement, voting and mobilization, more precisely: how to get involved in the political life, in the decision-making process at local level, the importance of voting at local, national and European level, about the role and interaction between democratic institutions at all levels. All in all, the purpose of our project was to stimulate the participation of young people in the elections as European citizens and active participants of their local communities.



THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT WERE:

- To enrich knowledge of the involved young people about elections and the role of the different EU institutions and bodies;
- To support the participants to understand the importance of voting and participation in the process as active European citizens;
- To develop the capacity of the participating young people to organize local information campaigns through which they can motivate other young people in participation in elections and all in all to be actively involved in their communities' lives.



In order to reach the above mentioned objectives, the participants took part in activities such as debate, World café, open discussions, research and presentations, meeting with members of the local council, simulations, video making, planning and implementing online and offline campaigns etc.

active citizenship

When we received the assignment to write about the topic “Active Citizens (+ human rights)” we started to search some meanings about this topic . These are the questions and answers that we got from participating on this project :

1. What does active citizenship mean to you , and what are the people's rights ?

Active citizenship means people getting involved in their communities and in democracy at all levels: starting from local through national to global level. All citizens should know their rights:



By clicking on the picture you can read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the United Nations' website

2. How can a citizen be active in their society ?

- Be aware and protect everyone's rights;
- Be critical , contribute to society and accept the new ideas;
- Do volunteering for the country you live and help/be part of local initiatives/NGOs;
- Keep up with the news to know what is happening;



On the picture: "Citizenship bicycle" activity - The participants reflected on the 4 aspects of citizenship on national and on EU level. They marked on the wheels how strong they feel the different aspects.

3. What can the young people do in order to be more active in their communities?

- Get involved in local and international youth projects , take initiatives;
- Do not be selfish, help others in need;
- Be open minded and active in political field;
- Set up activities in the community;
- Join local associations , spread ideas , share problems and solutions with others;

4. In what fields we should participate to be a succesful active citizen ?

A) Political level

We should express our freedom of speech , protest and participate in political events in our community , voting in every kind of election so that our voice would be heard and accepted from the other members from our community .

B) Social level

Active citizen should insure to flow the information and interaction of different groups to prevent isolated , marginalized and discriminated people in the community and they should encourage young people to became more productive , tolerant , supportive and involved in more projects .

C) Cultural level

Active citizen should be involved in cultural events, because in that way they would eliminate all kinds of prejudices and differences and that is the only way to provide respect for diversity and leave legacy to young generations in the future .

D) Economical level

Active citizen should be always against any kind of corruption , bribery and they should always pay his taxes to the community, to use their resources in responsible way to inharge his wealth to the future generations .



From all of this we can get a perfect conclusion that each active citizen knows his rights and with them he is ready to bear the responsibilities and so each community would be the perfect place for the citizens .

#youth involvement

Youth participation - also called youth involvement - has been used by government agencies, researchers, educators, and others to define and examine the active engagement of young people in schools, sports, government, community development and economic activity.

Youth participation refers to how young people can be involved in processes, institutions and decisions that affect their lives - and this can be active or passive. Active youth participation means you are engaging or are ready to engage.

Youth Involvement is essential to the future success of Scouting by ensuring that we remain relevant to the needs and interests of young people.

In a nutshell, participation means to be involved, to have tasks and to share and take over responsibility. It means to have access and to be included.



Why is youth participation so important?

Youth engagement helps build on important protective factors related to mental health, since it provides opportunities for youth to connect with their peers, build networks, and increase the sense that they're not alone.

Youth participation often requires some measure of student voice or youth voice, as well as youth/adult partnerships. Results are often measured by youth development goals, academic outcomes or returns on social capital. They may take the form of civic engagement, youth rights or intergenerational equity.



#voting

In this article the participants beside their thoughts used the following sources: Europarl.europa.eu / [Wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org/) / Dvk-rs.si

In this project we were also discussing about the importance of the European Parliament voting and election system.

Voting is a method for a group in order to make a collective decision or express an opinion usually following discussions, debates or election campaigns. By voting we choose our future, so every vote is important for our country. There are two types of voting: open or secret.

Voting rights are the most important element of the electoral system. This is one of the fundamental political rights of citizens. A distinction is made between ACTIVE and PASSIVE voting rights. Active voting rights relate to the circle of people who have the right to elect representative bodies, while the passive voting rights relate to the circle of people who have the right to be elected to such bodies.

Balance of voting is a scheme tailored to fundamental societal decision. How does it work? Citizens may obtain from voting on a fundamental direction and this guarantees the voting rights in a second voting stage on the variants of the fundamental direction chosen in the first. All the "losers" from the first stage also obtain voting rights in the second stage while "winners" do not.

European parliament elections

It gives you the chance to select who will represent you in the European Parliament and helps to decide what kind of Europe we have. The EU elections take place every five years and are the largest transnational elections in the world.

The last elections took part in May 2019 - they were shaped by the significant increase in voter turnout of 50,66 %. This is in fact the highest turnout since 1994 European elections. Moreover, during the last European elections in 2019, young people was more involved. In fact, there has a largest increase in participants under 25 and also between 25 and 39 years old. More people believe that their vote counts. Finally, the two main priorities of voters were the state of the economy and the environment.



The European Parliament

How voting works:

- Some aspects can vary by country, it is possible to vote by mail or from abroad.
- The election day normally start on a Thursday and finish on a Sunday.
- The number of members elected in each country depends on the size of the population.

In conclusion, during the Youth Exchange "Rural youth vote", the participants were able to discuss about the important notion of voting. Thanks to different activities such as debate, presentation, and informal education in general, the young people learnt about the European Parliament and EU Elections. They also talked about their national elections, and their rights. There are, now, more able to participate actively in the voting system.

“We need Europe in which the people parliament feel their voices are heard”- Parliament President David Sassoli in a speech at the European Council, 17 October 2019



#mobilization

Mass mobilization is getting more and more important for politics in the world of individualism. Targeting young people is even more challenging because of their hesitance to take part in social issues.

While the rate of participation or the amount of hesitance depends on the context, the very general approach of young people for politics is that it is not worth spending an enormous amount of time and energy for tiny benefits in turn. However, the accumulation of tiny achievements made the development possible. The point is to convince, create incentives and attract young people for mobilization.



Some of the challenges preventing young people to participate in social and political processes are the pressure upon them by older generations or the assumption exposed to them as if they are not experienced enough to have or express their opinions in a significant way. Labeling and judging young people are very discouraging for them.

Experiencing or being influenced by such prejudices, young people may choose not to participate in decision-making or deliberation processes even if they have considerable knowledge about the subject.



The possible solution to eliminate the external problems for young people to be mobilized is that they need to have something unique for them. A special atmosphere, private groups, or a platform that can help youth to know, meet, observe one another. This is the very reason for social media to become very useful, common, and popular among young people. However, the online platforms are not enough to mobilize young people in real life.

In contrast, they may serve as inhibitory variables because young people may consume their energy on these platforms. Hence, the face-to-face connection should be prioritized, while the online platforms function complementarily.

At **micro-level** (local) mobilization, there are some tools that can be used to attract young people such as arts, sciences, and sports activities. Local institutions can offer courses, workshops, quiz shows, or tournaments locally not only to attract young people but also to use these tools to raise awareness about key issues such as human rights, minority rights, climate change, and etc.

It should also be emphasized that these activities are mutually beneficial. They would be very significant if the benefit cannot be obtained individually because of logistic or material incompetency.



At macro-level mobilization, the young generations should be targeted according to contemporary concerns. Traditional ways of targeting young people would not work efficiently especially in developing and developed countries.

The young people care less about their material well-being in these countries and they are more focused on immaterial issues such as freedom of speech, minority rights, social justice, and also global issues such as climate change and responsible use of resources. Even if politics would like to act in a populist way, it has to be engaged in such issues and should come up with a couple of solutions to mobilize young generations.

As it can be observed easily by looking at the different answers given by the respondents of PEW Research, we obviously need young generations to be mobilized and to participate in social and political issues. Otherwise, we would continue to live in the world of old-fashioned mindsets. There is also a very crucial question: Who should take the initiative? Politics does not always act for the good of the future.



Hence, NGOs and local level institutions are highly important and relevant to instigate the mobilization of young people. To achieve this goal, they should work hand-in-hand with schools, universities, teachers, and parents. They should employ online and offline means of mobilization by focusing more on real world experiences.

our campaigns

As one part of the dissemination of the project (sharing the information), the participants got the task to plan, organise and implement campaigns during the youth exchange. The young people were shared in smaller groups with different topics and ideas.

The campaigns took place in Resita on the 8th October 2021 made by the youth exchange participants. The E-guide reports the activities that have been done through different projects, that comprehended different topics.



A. WORKSHOP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Youth Involvement

-The volunteers have been assigned with certain identities and they had to answer 3 questions and they had to keep their identity secret so that the others could guess. They were split in 2 groups. After they answered their questions to the group and they shared them with everyone.

Identities:

Liberal but non participant; International mindset; Conservative; Restrictive; In comfort zone; Nationalist; Have a collective mindset; Religious; Judgmental

Questions:

- Should refugees be allowed to work officially?
- Should LGBTQ+ people be given all official permissions to marry and all incentive for them not to be discriminated?
- Do you think that women are more caring for the family and men are better at work?



2. Social Issues

We made a poster about social issues and we presented our knowledge about the topic to the volunteers. After that we prepared some questions about social issues and the volunteers had to answer them and we had a discussion. At the end we gave them the chance to express their opinions.

Questions:

- What are social issues ?
- Types of social issues?
- How can we control social issues?

3. Voting

-We planned a different work to create awareness and consciousness in the workshop. We prepared small cards about voting. We asked some questions about the EU election system, political life in Europe, voting... participants answered the questions correctly, and we have gifted them with candy and chocolate. Participants were very interested to answer the questions.

B. OFFLINE CAMPAIGN

On Friday 8th of October we went on the streets of Reșita to interview the people about social issues and how to raise awareness. We were a team of 7 people. We were trying to make a survey with people. We were targeting Romanian people to see the reaction to sensitive subjects. The majority of people that answered were aged from 12 to 19. The rest were aged 20-28, but didn't quite answer all of our questions.

We learnt that people care more about themselves and their time, as in matters of gender, it was a 50/50 situation. Also, the old generation considered that gender shouldn't be equal, but the fact is that the young people think about the situation as "think outside of the box", that's why the percentage was "fifty-fifty".

C. ONLINE CAMPAIGN

As the Erasmus+ Youth exchange Online Project project team, we decided to prepare a campaign on awareness for young people. For this, we thought it would be useful to present our campaign on social media platforms that young people frequently use. We opened an Instagram account and shared our campaign materials. The name of the Instagram account we created is S.A.F.E.R, that stands for Social Awareness For Every Reșitean.

What is SAFER?

SAFER is a project created by young people who want to improve resiteanians' awareness about different topics.



Our mission:

Recognizing situational demands and opportunities, being motivated to contribute to the well-being of one's family, friends, school, community and the environment.

Why is it important?

Social awareness helps children in improving their social skills by interacting with people from diverse backgrounds. It teaches the skills of communication, collaboration, social responsibility, and professionalism.

Various posters, videos, quizzes and photos of the city of Reşita made up our materials.

conclusion

The activities that we have done during the project helped us on many levels: we had the possibility to work together reinforcing our skills and cooperating. Also, it was helpful to understand what we should improve while working on the same subject.

The strengths of the project were cooperation and coordination; thanks to them, we were able to organize every task without confusion. We all understood that working in a group means that everyone has to have the chance to express their opinions freely and be able to elaborate them with the others.

#video

As a result of the project there was a short video made to present our 10 days:

