# Get Involved!

## Active Citizenship for Young People

Active citizenship is all about getting involved in your community and working to make it better. As an active citizen, you participate politically and socially - whether it's joining a city council, voting in elections, or starting a club at school. Democracies depend on citizens taking part, but there are many other ways to create change. Grab some friends and arrange a beach cleanup. Feeling extra motivated? Form an organisation to tackle issues in a bigger way, like through protests, lobbying, and raising awareness. With the right knowledge, skills and attitude, young people have the power to make real improvements in their communities.

Active citizenship is conditioned by the opportunities and constraints of the social and political system in place, but **citizenship competence** helps to realise its full potential. It is the ability to act as a responsible citizen and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability. Citizenship competence includes essential knowledge, skills and attitudes.
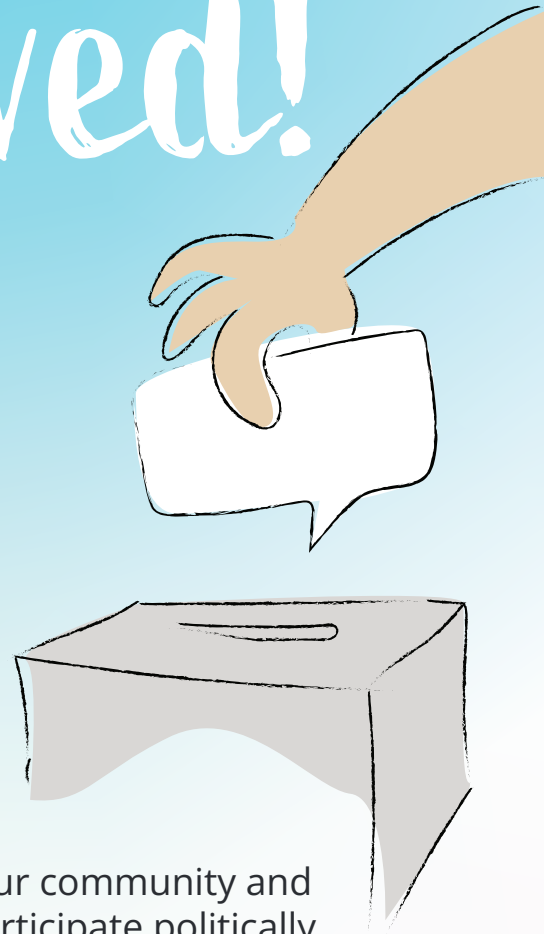
# Know the Issues (knowledge)

Citizenship knowledge involves an understanding of the functioning of the European Union, European common values, as expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Familiarity with European integration as well as an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe and the world is essential. This includes an understanding of the multicultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies.

Understanding how **parliaments** work is crucial. Parliaments are where laws are made and governments are held accountable. They are designed to represent diverse voices, including young people's. By learning about your local, national, and European parliament, you can better advocate for your needs, engage with elected representatives, and even consider future roles in formal politics. Youth work can connect you to these vital institutions through simulated debates, visits, and direct dialogue with parliamentarians.

But it's not just about who you vote for or how laws get made – it's also about *how we talk to each other* to figure things out. That's what **deliberative democracy** is all about.

Imagine a space where everyone genuinely listens, tries to understand different perspectives, and then works together to find the best solutions. Deliberative democracy is about having informed discussions where you actually think about the facts and consider everyone's ideas to make smarter, more thoughtful decisions as a group. So, how does this happen in real life? Through activities such as **Citizens' Assemblies**, where a group of everyday people gets chosen to learn about an issue, hear from experts, and then suggest solutions. Or **Deliberative Polls**, which show how people's opinions can change once they've had a proper, informed discussion. And there's also **Participatory Budgeting**, where people in a community get to decide directly how some public money is spent after discussion. These methods are all about making sure more voices are heard and that decisions are made carefully!

## Speak Up and Take Action (skills)

Citizenship skills include the ability to work well with other people on things that benefit everyone – like making our world more sustainable.
This means developing skills like **critical thinking** (asking good questions), being able to explain ideas clearly, and jumping into community activities and decisions at every level, whether it's in your town, your country, or even the whole EU. And don't forget **media literacy**! Youth need to be able to find, understand, and interact with all kinds of media, figure out its role in society and grasp the full picture when consuming information.

# Stay Open-Minded (attitudes)

Being an active citizen means having a powerful attitude. The core of it is having a deep **respect for human rights**, which is basically the foundation of a fair and just democracy. This attitude makes you ready and willing to jump into democratic decision-making at every level – from your local community right up to the EU – and participate constructively in all kinds of civic activities. It also means you'll **respect diversity** in every form, support gender equality, build strong community connections, live in ways that are good for the planet, promote peace, always respect other people's privacy, and proudly take responsibility for our environment.

# Tools to Get Started

Youth workers should promote citizenship competence in their professional practice and personal life. If you are a youth worker or a young person, consider using non-formal methods to foster active citizenship in your community. Toolkit made for this purpose is available for **download here.**

This material has been made by Udruga Prizma in the scope of Erasmus+ funded training course *Civitas 2025: Promoting Active Citizenship through Youth Work*. The author owns no copyright over the material.

Co-funded by
the European Union

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2025
Promoting Active Citizenship through Youth Work