



Fundatia Academica "ALUMNI"
a Colegiului National "Mircea cel Batran"



ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP – COMMITMENT

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OCTOBRE 2015, PARIS

Active citizen is the person that wants to make a positive difference to the local community or to an individual person, or make something happen.

- **Social entrepreneurship** is the attempt to draw upon business techniques to find solutions to social problems.
- **Volunteerism** is a movement that benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens by purposefully creating opportunities for participation.
- **Citizen Engagement** is that aspect of Active Citizenship that is influenced mostly by Politicians, Government Officials and Civil servants and is a measure of the success of the Open Government Partnership.

Key characteristics of Active Citizenship



- People participates in many activities of the community: involvement in a voluntary activity or engagement in activities with local government agencies.
- People are empowered to play a part in the decisions and processes, particularly public policy and services.
- People become able and willing to know and understand political/social/economic context of their participation, so that they could make informed decisions.
- People is able to challenge policies/actions and existing structures on the basis of democratic principles: equality, inclusiveness, diversity and social justice.

Personal benefits: valuing our skills, improving our employability and meeting new people.



Know where to go to get what we need

In order to make changes we have to make our voice heard, ask people for information and know how to get what we want from individuals and organisations. This could involve negotiating, campaigning, lobbying, researching issues, listing pros and cons, planning what we are going to say and how to say it – or simply **being more assertive!**

Personal benefits: valuing our skills, improving our employability and meeting new people.



We need to know how the external world operates: how decision-making structures are set up, how these structures work, who is involved, how accountable they are, who holds power in any given situation.

This means knowing about the local, national and international structures that impact upon our lives. If we are clear about our place within the system, we start to have a clearer understanding about our rights and responsibilities. Once we have this knowledge, we could make choices about where we want to be and the roles we want to play.

Some of major areas of civil activism



- * To understand emigration and integration.
- * To preserve the local and national environment.
- * To fight against injustice.
- * To protect human rights.
- * To fight against all forms of discrimination: gender, race, religion, disabilities.
- * To fight against homelessness.
- * To protect children and family.
- * To fight against brainwash.
- * To militate for transparency.
- * To fight against political and economic abuses.
- * To condemn domestic violence and sexual abuse.
- * To support and assist victims of all kinds of injustice and abuses.

What could we do as an active citizen?



- Helping out a neighbour or a local community group.
- Advise the local public bodies by taking part in consultations and questionnaires, attending neighbourhood meetings or simply posting a question on Twitter.
- Put pressure on the council or Government by taking part in direct action. Petitions are a way to voice a concern and gather support.
- Assist or provide advice to a public service or charity.
- Become a citizen governor and take part in decision-making that affects the local school, court or council.

What could I do as a Voter?



- Vote at all levels and choose the right people.
- Phone a friend to remind him to vote.
- To make sure that we are on the register of electors.
- Register for a postal vote if we have mobility issues.
- Sign petitions about issues that concern us.
- Meet with our local political representative about key issues.
- Inform ourself by reading about local issues.

What to do as a Community Group Member?



- Take part in activities with like-minded people: promoting arts, dancing, wall climbing, book clubs, lace making, growing food, paint a mural over graffiti, join a hillwalking, jogging or any other sporting organisation.
- By doing these activities, meet new people, find new friends, learn new skills: self-confidence, mobility, literacy, numeracy, interpersonal and social skills, IT Skills.

What to do as a good neighbour?



- Help people to be more active/less dependent on public services.
- Keep a watch on our neighbour's home while they are away.
- Help elderly persons by giving information about local services.
- Look after a neighbour's pet while they are on holiday.
- Shop at a local, family owned business.
- Organize a carpooling campaign in the area.
- Join the neighbourhood watch or start a book club in the area.

What to do as a responsible citizen?



* Protect the environment: start recycling our waste, clean up rubbish along a river, beach or park. * Give blood. * Donate unwanted clothing/toys/books/ the old computer to a charity shop/ library/school. * Attend open evenings, support local charity events. * Give feedback to public bodies about their services. * Answer questionnaires, respond to surveys, give feedback, attend neighbourhood meetings. * Search on Internet, put notice boards at civic buildings, hospitals, service providers.

What to do as a Volunteer?



- * Help a local organisation.
- * Do some office work.
- * Share skills by coaching a sports team.
- * Run a cookery club.
- * Plant a tree.
- * Deliver meals to homebound individuals.
- * Plant flowers in public areas that could use some colour.
- * Mentor a young person.
- * Coach a children's sports team.
- * Volunteer at Red Cross.
- * Visit senior citizens at a nursing home.
- * Fundraise for charity.
- * Volunteer on a helpline.
- * Teach at an adult literacy center.
- * Participate in a marathon for our favorite charity.
- * Reading to old people in hospital.

What to do as a Community Activist?



- Take action to change a local situation: campaign, write to parliamentarians/to the editor of the local newspaper.
- Establish a network or group, set up or sign a petition, lobby.
- Join a National or International organization.
- Organise an evening for charity.
- Organise an event to raise awareness of a problem.
- Raise awareness of political issues in our community.
- Organise a local debate on any issue for the community.

What could I do as a Citizen Adviser?



- Advise and help making decisions about local services.
- Become a charity trustee, magistrate, councilor, member of a tenant panel, school governor.
- Liaise with a local university or school to improve community relations.
- Liaise with local hospital, health centre or medical practice to give patient feedback.

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Personal benefits: valuing our skills, improving our employability and meeting new people



- Confidence building
- Validating own value and life experiences
- Presentation skills
- Public speaking
- Chairing meetings
- Budgeting, planning
- Dealing with difficult situations
- Being more assertive
- Increasing self-esteem
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Personal benefits: valuing our skills, improving our employability and meeting new people.



Reflect upon our own situation in relation to the wider context of life's experiences. It provides the opportunity to make sense of the factors that shape our lives: education, religion, family, motherhood, sexuality, class, race, politics, economic dependence.

If we could learn how to value ourselves and communicate with others in a genuine way, we are in a better position to develop a network of support and deal with the inevitable conflicts and work together to make positive changes.

Some good practice examples from the partnerships across Europe and the World



- **UK: citizenship education** is now compulsory in schools up to 14 and is often available as an option beyond that age.
- **JCI Ireland (Junior Chamber International): Active Citizen week** is a time of year entirely dedicated to gathering as many people as possible to take action and fight back against the major problems impacting the community.
- **Scotland, UK: active citizenship** is one of the 3 major themes of community policy since 1998.
- **Council of Europe: Education for Democratic Citizenship**



Thank you for your attention!