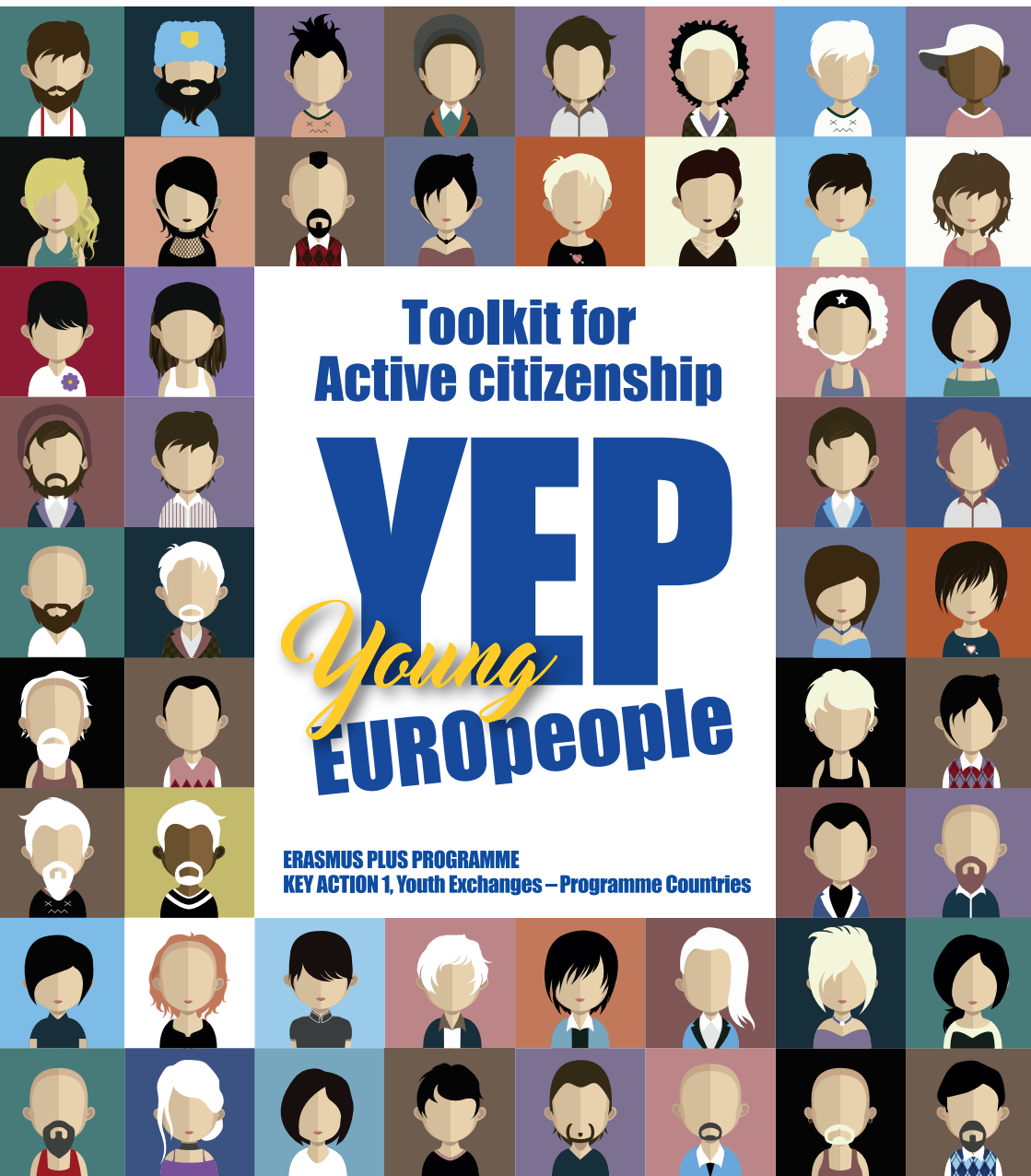




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Toolkit for Active citizenship

YEP *Young* EUROpeople

ERASMUS PLUS PROGRAMME
KEY ACTION 1, Youth Exchanges – Programme Countries

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Toolkit for Active citizenship

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1. INTRODUCTION

“YEP: YoungEuroPeople”

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. It runs for seven years, from 2014 to 2020, and it makes possible for youngsters to go abroad and to be active European citizens in a different country. The program **enables young people to discuss, to work, to evolve and to make a meaningful impact in their society**. Participants aspire to make changes according to the youngsters’ opinion of more effective and successful European Union. The program focuses on education course and **non-formal learning**, which is a dynamic way where the participants learn by doing.





“YEP: YoungEuroPeople” is a **Youth Exchange**, realized under the Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme, held in **Cagliari, Italy**, from 27th of April till 4th of May with all together **41 participants** from six different European countries: **Italy, Spain, Greece, Netherlands, Romania** and **Bulgaria**.

The **project aims** to encourage young people and civil society organizations to undertake a discussion and comparison on different topics: **European citizenship, civic engagement and active participation**. The participants learn through the project how to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and attract/motivate young people to the Community institutions. The promotion of volunteering is used as a crucial tool in the development of a sense of commitment to the socio-political development of their community.





2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

This **manual aims** to inform about the activities which were held during this project. It also focuses on achievements young people want to fulfil related to active participation of European citizens, especially the youth. This manual is compiled by the participants of the project and will be **available to anyone** interested in the subject. In this manual, the recommendations are provided to decision-makers and persons active in their society and **promote non-formal learning**. Moreover, recommendations help to increase awareness and visibility about similar kind of projects and **motivate people** to actively participate in them.

3. COUNTRY REALITIES

In this chapter the **cultural differences** among Spain, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands will be discussed. The first subchapter will be about '**education**', the second about '**volunteering**' and the third about '**environment**'.





3.1 Education

In **Spain** town halls and some associations carry out language courses and computer science **courses** for free. For example, Catalan and English languages. This is organized by the city councils for not only youngsters but also adults. The participants can apply for the language course for free if they do not have a job. Persons with a job can also apply, but they must pay a fee. However, in **Romania** languages courses are not offered for free, even if the participant does not have a job. The people who apply for a language course are often interested in working abroad or to get a higher position in their job. In The **Netherlands**, it is again completely different comparing to Spain and Romania. Language courses are popular but participants always should pay a fee. One exception is the free Dutch language course which is offered for immigrants so they can learn the language and adapt easier to the culture in the Netherlands.





The same applies in Spain. Spanish courses are offered for immigrants for the same reasons as in The Netherlands. In **Greece**, the courses are not for free as well. One can learn a foreign language in the high school and college, but mostly the level of studying is not high so students have to pay for extra classes if they want to improve. However, an exception to this is volunteers. Young people from Greece organize language lessons for free. Those young people are supported by NGOs to organize those classes. In Greece, there are also free courses to support the students with economical needs. They also can take part in the volunteer program and sometimes to participate in a program related to their studies.

In **Bulgaria**, there are both paid and free language courses. Most of them are private and are not related with the Bulgarian education system. Most of the students go to those courses to improve their knowledge. The free lessons are organised at the schools, supported by the European Union, but only students participate.

In Spain, the councils do projects for unemployed youth which lasts for 6 months (paid internships funded by the local municipalities). The councils make courses about how to write a CV and how to find a job.





3.2 Volunteering

In **Greece** many people are blood, organ and bone marrow donors. The same is in The **Netherlands**, a lot of awareness is created for blood, organ and marrow **donation**. People are asked to fill in a form to state whether they want to donate or not. In this way, their family does not have to make this difficult decision for them if they die. In Spain blood donation and marrow donations are popular. Less common is organ donation. The same applies for **Italy**. Usually, in some institutions (universities, hospitals...) there is a bus for people to donate blood. In the last year a platform was created for marrow donation.



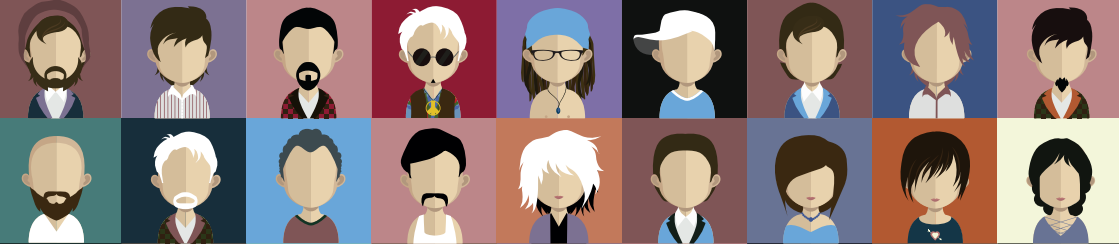


In **Romania** donations are not common. However, there are some student associations who encourage the students and youth to donate blood regularly. In some countries, you can earn money by donating. For example, in Romania when you donate blood the person gets between 10 and 20 euros.

In Greece the spares of food, clothes and pharmaceuticals are made for those in need. Homes are granted for unemployed and homeless, we can see a similar situation in Italy.

In **Spain**, there are many associations that help the refugees with donations of clothes, food and money. The refugees too can have a place to stay and even receives a small pocket money. Also, the Spanish city council and several associations collect clothes and food to give it to the people with few resources. In Italy, there are many organizations that work for refugees and provide them not only with accommodation and food but also with language courses, professional courses and psychological support.





Volunteering is also part of active citizenship that concerns Bulgaria. In **Bulgaria**, most of the volunteers are members of NGOs. The number of people who volunteer without any payment is very small. Bulgarians think that helping others should be a part of their awareness and people should do it for their own satisfaction. In almost every city of Bulgaria there is at least one NGO. Mostly students are taking part in them maybe because they have more free time. Their main goal is for young people to become more active through helping others, taking responsibility, organising cultural, sport related or charity events. In this way they become more open-minded, they gain knowledge, which is very important since the future depends on them.

In **Spain**, the soccer games are organized in such way that also retired players have a chance to play against others and in this way the money donations are made for NGOs. Also, there are personal trainers who engage in outdoor sports activities for free. In Romania year by year, the number of youth volunteers is rising. It is possible to volunteer not only in normal places like UNICEF and RED CRUCE, but also in hundreds of NGO's.

But that's not all, in the big student cities it is cool to be a volunteer in a student association which is doing a great job involving only students in a very huge diversity of topics.





3.2. Charity events

One of the good qualities of the Bulgarians their characteristic of being very compassionate. So, in **Bulgaria** many events of charity are organised. For instance, one of the smallest organisation in Varna, called PTPI "The Dolphins" organised charity bazaar for Christmas and collected money (more than 14 000 euro), which was given to a hospital for children with disability.

Also in **Romania**, there are a lot of cultural events - the most common ones are intercultural nights where organisations present the culture of other countries and all the money goes to charity.





3.3 Environment

In **Spain**, the high school students go to plant a tree once a year. Also, once a year, to encourage non-pollution, public transport is for free so people does not need to go by car. The last Sunday of each month, in the historic centre of each city it is prohibited to enter by car and motorcycle. To promote respect for nature, all schools go to deforested areas and plant trees. In Greece, there are climbing and hiking clubs. At the same time recycling takes place as well as tree planting. In **Bulgaria**, very few people care about the environment around them. This is partially the institutions' fault because they do not motivate people enough. Responsible persons should do more campaigns.





The alternative is, for example, when someone gives 1 kg of old paper, he receives coupons for food in return.

In this way, the people will eventually start to be more responsible for the planet.

In **Romania** only environment-related things are tree planting and recycling. It is done just by the organisations; the government does not get involved.





4. OUTCOME

The main outcomes of this project based on the results of the different activities point out the following conclusion: **participants feel like they've developed personally, and have had plenty of chances to reflect on themselves.** The personal reflection was triggered by multicultural interaction: it makes people more aware about different cultures, they got to learn about different points of view and therefore expanded visions and their horizons. Not only awareness of EU citizen rights, but also on EU institutions. By means of teamwork and collaboration, one gets to challenge his or her own point of view about political and social issues. Through these kinds of active participation, a final idea is shaped and participants can return home with food for with new material to think about. In conclusion, youngsters and institutions should go together to cooperate and stimulate the involvement of youth through a legal frame. Through transparent interactive platforms we can reduce the levels of bureaucracy and even discuss issues that we experience, like high unemployment rates. Finally, reducing the average age of policy makers will make these aspirations more realistic.

In brief: these are our following recommendations.





5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 For policy makers:

a) We suggest a focus shift towards a more positive reinforcement system, rewarding the citizens for good actions and giving them more feedback when they volunteer or collaborate in the life of their communities.

b) Regarding connectivity in our societies, we concluded that we need to make more use of platforms. These could be forums where citizens can interactively address issues, exchange ideas and get together to come to an agreement on the issues. We believe that a body such as this one could boost a stronger connection between the different agents that form a society.

c) Considering educational reform, policy makers should have a serious look at compulsory civic education at high schools: not only basic economics, but also politics & public administration and more info about the European Union. Furthermore, universities should be funded by the EU to inspire students.

d) For employment, the private sector ought to be more involved. As an example, by giving those instances tax reductions, we can stimulate them to cooperate in achieving this.

e) With informational campaigns, we can reach out to our target group. Mind that these campaigns should be adapted to the demographic group.





5.2 For youngsters

- a) Being part of an NGO is a great way for gaining awareness of political, economic, environmental, cultural etc. issues.
- b) Finding what drives or inspires a person will not only help to contribute to society more, but also develop a personality.
- c) One can help others and vice versa by peer-to-peer practices, meaning that one can exchange ideas and experiences with other people. Furthermore, a person has the chance to learn from their achievements and mistakes.
- d) Taking part in debate clubs can develop social skills, logical and critical thinking and teach how to stand up for oneself and find logical fallacies within various arguments.
- e) By taking care of the environment, it is investment in one's sustainable future and for generations to come, while having a sense of belonging to the world.
- f) By addressing concerns, setting goals for oneself and believing in them, one can get motivation from within and achieve more than imagined.





6. CONCLUSION

All the content of this publication has been **realized** by the organization and the participants of the project.





ORGANIZATIONS

Associazione Studenti per la Città, Italy

Bulgarian Youth Association, Bulgaria

ASOCIATIA GEYC, Romania

Youth Center of Epirus, Greece

Stichting Diversiteitsland, Netherlands

Ajuntament del Puig de Santa Maria, Spain

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