

ACTIVE YOUTH, ACTIVE CITIZENS

-EBOOK-

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES:



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1. INTRODUCTION



Why is it important?

Active youth citizenship is essential for building a vibrant, inclusive, and democratic society. It empowers young people to be responsible, informed, and engaged members of their communities, fostering positive social change and ensuring a brighter future for all.

Realizing the importance of active citizenship is crucial when existing as a young person, as it shapes the societies and communities they will then work and live in.

Active citizenship creates an environment where we can critically think about the issues our society and communities face, how we can help work on and change them and grow and empower empathy.



2. BULGARIA

➤ Country Profiles

Bulgaria is a parliamentary democracy where the prime minister is the head of government and the most powerful executive position. The political system has three branches—legislative, executive and judicial, with universal suffrage for citizens at least 18 years old.

Bulgaria has good foundations for civic participation, resulting from a relatively good legal framework, but real practices and real civic activity are still at a very low level.

➤ Legal Framework

Bulgaria has a civil law legal system. The judiciary is overseen by the Ministry of Justice. The legal system is regarded by both domestic and international observers as one of Europe's most inefficient due to pervasive lack of transparency and corruption.

► Political Participation

During 2021–2023 Bulgaria is in an ongoing political crisis. It is a period of instability in the country, as we faced five elections over two years: April 2021, July 2021, November 2021, October 2022 and April 2023.

Many young people do not trust in the political parties and refuse to vote. For the past 20 years only 20-30% of the population vote.

In last few years there is a tendency each political party to have a youth organization. However, young people still have a hard time trusting parties.

► Education and Awareness

We think that more public awareness should be raised of development issues and promoting development education in Bulgaria.

The concept is to support and promote the quality of development education and raise awareness among the young people. We think we should promote a growing awareness and critical understanding of society's role, responsibilities and way of life in relation to an interdependent world.

► Challenges and opportunities

In our country Bulgaria. There are many problems, one of them is spread throughout the country, it is related to sports and, in general, to the development of young personnel.

3. ROMANIA

► Country Profiles

Romania it is an eastern European country that was part of the former communist bloc, and the effects are still visible today. Romania faces challenges such as corruption, political instability, and emigration of its skilled workforce.

The country is still struggling with big problems in the education and medical systems. However, people have remained very open and confident.

A formerly communist country, the political system still operates under a shadow of some older practices and the people's mentality is a little more conservative, compared to Western countries.

► Legal Framework

Legal Framework in Romania that promotes civic engagement and participation. processes. Here are some key elements of the legal framework for active citizenship in Romania:

- law on associations**
- law on public assemblies**
- law on local public administration**
- law on access to information**

► Political Participation

Being an active citizen means taking an active role in your community and participating in civic life to make a positive impact on society. Here's political participation for active citizens in Romania:

- voting
- Running for office
- youth potential organizations
- advocacy and activism

► Civil Society

Civil society plays a vital role in promoting active citizenship among young people in Romania. Youth-led organizations, community groups, and other civic associations create platforms and opportunities for young people to engage, participate, and contribute to their communities.

These organizations often focus on issues such as human rights, environmental sustainability, social justice, education, and youth empowerment.

► **Education and Awareness**

Schools, universities, and other institutions have the opportunity to provide civic education and create awareness about democratic values, civic rights, responsibilities, and the importance of active participation. Schools and universities can integrate civic education into their curriculum, ensuring that students receive instruction on democratic principles, human rights, civic engagement, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

► **Challenges and opportunities**

In their efforts to engage in active citizenship, young people in Romania face a range of challenges and opportunities, including the following:

- Political polarization**
- Social inequality**
- Obtaining meaningful representation**

4. SPAIN

► Country Profiles

Spain is a country with a rich history, culture, and political system. While the country has made significant progress in recent years, there are still many challenges facing young people in Spain. High youth unemployment, regional identity, immigration, and climate change are just a few of the issues that require attention and action. However, Spain's dynamic and diverse society, combined with its strong democratic institutions, provide a solid foundation for addressing these challenges and building a brighter future for all generations.

► Legal Framework

Voting Rights:

- **Electoral Law**
- **Age Requirement**
- **Electoral Information**

2. Civic Participation:

- **Law on Citizen Participation**
- **Youth Councils**

3. Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- **Constitution**
- **Right to Protest**
- **Media Pluralism**

► **Political Participation**

In Spain, young people have been particularly influential in recent years, with the 2019 general election seeing a significant increase in voter turnout among 18-24-year-olds. This has been attributed to a growing sense of disillusionment with established political parties and a desire for change, with many young people turning to new, more diverse political movements and parties.

► **Civil Society**

In Spain, community groups and civic associations such as the Spanish Youth Red Cross and Youth for Social Equality work to empower young people through various activities such as volunteer work and education programs.

► **Education and Awareness**

Education and awareness explores the pivotal role of education and awareness-raising in fostering active citizenship among young people in Spain. It examines how schools, universities, and other institutions contribute to promoting civic education and cultivating a sense of civic responsibility among the youth population.

► **Challenges and opportunities**

- Challenge: Limited youth representation in decision-making processes**
- Opportunity: Young people can advocate for youth-led organizations and initiatives across various sectors, providing opportunities for young people to participate in shaping their societies.**

5. CZECH REPUBLIC

➤ Country Profiles

The Czech Republic had various opportunities for active citizenship among young people. Young Czech citizens have the chance to engage in civic activities, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute to their communities in different ways. Here are a few aspects related to active citizenship for young people in the Czech Republic:

- Youth Organizations
- Young Councils
- Education and Awareness
- European Union Programs
- Online Platforms and Campaigns

➤ Legal Framework

Constitution of the Czech Republic

- Citizenship Act
- Election Law
- Law on Associations
- Freedom of Expression Act

► Political Participation

To be politically active in the Czech Republic, here are a few steps you can take:

- **Political education**
- **Join a political party**
- **Take part in elections**
- **Get involved locally**
- **Use social media**
- **Take part in demonstrations and rallies**
- **Contact your representatives**

Remember that political involvement is an ongoing process. It's important to stay informed, maintain an open dialogue with others and look for opportunities to participate actively in the political life of your country.

► Civil Society

These organisations provide safe spaces and opportunities for young people to engage in civic activities, express their opinions and participate in making decisions that affect their lives. Some of the activities they carry out include:

- **Civic education**
- **Political participation**
- **Volunteering and community work**

Together, these activities promoted by civil society help young Czechs develop leadership skills, strengthen their sense of belonging to the community and understand the importance of their active participation in society.

► Education and Awareness

In the Czech Republic, schools play a significant role in promoting civic education and fostering active citizenship among young people. Here are some ways in which schools promote civic education in the country:

- Civic Education Curriculum
- Extracurricular Activities
- School Projects and Competitions
- Field Trips and Guest Speakers
- Media Literacy

It's important to note that the specifics of civic education promotion may vary between schools and educational levels in the Czech Republic.

► Challenges and opportunities

Political polarization is one of the major challenges facing young Czechs in their quest for civic engagement. As in many countries, political cleavages have intensified in recent years, creating divisions within society. Young people often find themselves caught between divergent political opinions, which can hinder their desire to become actively involved. However, this polarisation can also be seen as an opportunity, as it encourages young people to inform themselves, develop their critical faculties and take part in public debate to promote the ideas and values they hold dear.

6. NORTH MACEDONIA

► Country Profiles

The mix of different cultures and lived experiences of different generations have created for a unique environment for young people and a unique set of issues with beliefs and solutions when it comes to problems that might be crucial to young people living in this society.

► Legal Framework

Youth participation in North Macedonia is encouraged and supported through a legal framework that recognizes the importance of engaging young people in decision-making processes. The Law on Youth and the Strategy for Youth Policy provide a framework for creating opportunities for young people to voice their opinions, contribute their ideas, and actively involved in shaping policies and programs that affect them.

► Political Participation

Young people in North Macedonia play an increasingly important role in political participation and shaping the country's future. They actively engage in various political activities, including joining political parties, participating in youth-led organizations, and advocating for their rights and interests.

► Civil Society

Civil society and active citizenship play vital role in youth participation in North Macedonia, providing platforms for young individuals to actively engage and contribute to their communities.

► Education and Awareness

Education and raising awareness play a crucial role in empowering young people in North Macedonia to become active citizens. The education system is an important avenue for instilling civic values, democratic principles, and a sense of social responsibility. It equips students with critical thinking skills, teaches them about their rights and responsibilities, and highlights the significance of civic engagement. Schools often go beyond textbooks, organizing debates, simulations, and community service projects that involve students in real-world issues.

► Challenges and opportunities

Engaging in active citizenship is not always a smooth ride for young people in North Macedonia. They face their fair share of challenges alongside exciting opportunities. One major hurdle is the lack of resources and platforms that allow them to make a meaningful impact. Limited funding and economic disparities can make it tough to launch and sustain projects that create real change.

Moreover, outdated attitudes and societal norms sometimes underestimate the value of youth participation, making it harder for young individuals to be heard in decision-making processes. But it's not all gloomy! There are bright spots too. The rise of digital platforms and social media gives young people a powerful voice, allowing them to spread awareness and rally support for their causes.

7. ITALY

► Country Profiles

The politics of Italy are conducted through a parliamentary republic with a multi-party system.

Italy's human rights actions

In line with the priorities of Italy's 2019-2021 mandate in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Italy's human rights actions focus, in particular, on several priority issues: the fight against all forms of discrimination; a universal moratorium on the death penalty; the promotion of women's and girls' rights (including campaigns against female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages); the protection and promotion of children's rights (especially of vulnerable children); the protection of freedom of religion and belief and the rights of members of religious minorities; the fight against human trafficking; the promotion of the rights of disabled persons; the protection of the cultural heritage; the protection of human rights defenders.



Legal Framework

The the legal framework for active citizenship in italy from the perspective of young people is based on the fact that Italy is a parliamentary republic: the President of the Republic is elected for a seven-year term by the two houses of Parliament in joint session, together with special electors appointed by the Regional Councils.



Civil Society

Organisations are generally understood to be youth-led, non-profit, voluntary non-governmental associations, and under some circumstances, can instead be part of the state apparatus or be youth worker-led. They are mostly established to further the political, social, cultural, or economic goals of their members. This is done by implementing activities for young people and/or engaging in advocacy work to promote their cause.



Education and Awareness

In Italy since 2021 there is a lesson every week called “civic education” in every kind of school, from the primary school to the high school, in order to prepare children and kids to be good citizens in their future. The law says that kids have to make at least 33 hours per year in “civic education”.

► Challenges and opportunities

Nearly one-third of all jobs held by young people in Italy were destroyed during the recession. Young people were hit hard – harder than their elders – probably because they were more likely to hold temporary jobs (easier to terminate) at the time of the crisis, and/or were new entrants to the labor market at a time when firms were not hiring.

Years after the start of the recession the situation of youth in the Italian labor market remains quite bleak. Nearly one in four young people in Italy are neither in employment, education, or training (NEETs) – the highest share among OECD countries after Turkey. The school-to-work transition – i.e. the time it takes for young people to transit from the education system to the world of work[iii] – is also among the longest in the OECD (see Quintini and Martin, 2014).

8. BEST PRACTICES

getting
involved in

1. lobbying
2. advocacy
3. European
Solidarity Corps
4. Erasmus projects
5. humanitarian
associations

