



RECOMMENDATION PAPER

5 CITIZENSHIP, 1 SOLIDARITY

*collection of ideas, suggestions, and proposals
bornt during the Community campaigns*



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of the European Union

YOUTH FOR EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

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About the project

"YES! - Youth for European Solidarity" was a 2-year network, designed for creating spaces for discussion on the meaning of Solidarity in times of crisis in Europe, on the effectiveness of existing European policies and programs supporting solidarity projects, and on the Future of Solidarity in Europe, with the identification of innovative tools that could guarantee a strengthening of the European integration process. The 15 partners from 13 different nations (IT, PL, BG, LT, UK, RS, RKS, HE, SP, PT, FR, DE, SE) involved about 500 direct and 55,000 indirect participants, thanks to the organization of international events during the Europe Day, World Environment Day, Digital Learning Day, EU Cooperation Day, World Fair Trade Day. The objective of raising citizens' awareness of active citizenship for solidarity was achieved through a structured work plan that included:

- 4 international events, focused on 5 citizenships (European, Economic, Ecological, Digital, and Global) where 26 young people (2 per country) were trained and became "ESAs: European Solidarity Animators" and ensured sustainability and a long-term impact at the community level;
- 2 local events, one for the initial promotion and for the selection of future ESAs and the other as a space for discussion on Solidarity and experimentation of the existing tools of participation in European democratic life, were organized by the ESAs in their rural and suburban communities (Community Campaigns);
- The production of two tangible deliverables:
 1. The "ESAs Toolkit" that approaches the methodology of the 5 Citizenships in support of Solidarity initiatives in Europe, and has been distributed to other possible stakeholders, ensuring in this way replicability;
 2. This Final Recommendation Paper "5 Citizenship, 1 Solidarity", comprises a collection of all the ideas, suggestions, and proposals that were born during the Community Campaigns and delivered to the relevant decision-makers and policymakers at every level, with the help of Eurodesk offices, existing within the partnership.

SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES



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The methodology

This paper aims to raise citizens' awareness of active citizenship in relation to solidarity, by collecting ideas, suggestions, and proposals to be delivered to the relevant decision-makers and policymakers at every level.

The present recommendation paper used a quantitative and qualitative collection data survey and desk-based research for exploring the 5 citizenships and solidarity.

A sample of 58 people participated in the online survey by accessing the following link <https://forms.gle/cTUs1Q4QQvw62376A>. The respondents came from the project's partner countries (Spain, the United Kingdom, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Poland, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, and Kosovo). In terms of demographics, 65,5% are from the urban area and 34,5% from the rural area.

In regards to education 39,7% completed a master's degree, 31% a bachelor's degree, 24,1% took a high school diploma, and 5,1% of respondents completed (9th grade, middle diploma, and middle school). The majority of respondents (51,7%) are employed full-time, 22,4% are students, 12,1% are employed part-time, 6,9% are self-employed, 5,2% are not employed, and 1,7% are a trainee.

All the data collected has respected the recommendations for ethical research, respecting anonymity, and with the Data Protection Act of Regulation (EU) No 2016/679 of the European Parliament and the Council of 27 April on the protection of individuals concerning the processing of personal data and the free movement of the data.



The 5 Citizenships

European Citizenship

The concept of “European citizenship” is defined in documents like the Amsterdam treaty, and the Treaty of Lisbon:

“In all its activities, the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention from its institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies. Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship and shall not replace it.” – Treaty of Lisbon, Title II Article 8, 2007.

According to the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, the EU citizens have additional rights, such as:

- non-discrimination based on nationality
- move and reside freely within the EU
- vote for and stand as a candidate in European Parliament and municipal elections
- consular protection (help from the embassy or consulate of any other EU country to EU citizens in distress in a country outside the EU where they have no embassy or consulate in their own country)
- petition the European Parliament and complain to the European Ombudsman
- launch or support a European citizens' initiative, asking the European Commission to propose legislation on an issue that matters to them
- contact and receive a response from any EU institution in one of the EU's official languages
- access European Parliament, European Commission, and Council documents under certain conditions
- equal access to the EU Civil Service.

As can be noticed, among the rights and responsibilities that citizenship involves, citizens of the EU, have extra rights and duties. The treaty of Maastricht established the European Union citizenship and delineated a new set of rights that are available to all nationals of all EU member states.

When respondents were asked **“What does European Citizenship mean to you?”** some additional aspects were highlighted. European Citizenship brings them the *feeling of belonging* to a larger community with European Values. This means that “every citizen is part of something bigger”, “a group of countries working for common goals, and share the same way of looking into the future”.

“The respect and the “proud” for the European Union and his partners”

“I am not a citizen of Europe (as in, I am not a citizen of the E.U). I think that in the broadest possible sense, it should be understood to mean a sense of belonging to Europe, and sharing in certain common 'European' values.”

“For me, it means the collective belonging to a transnational governance and political system. It means we have in theory the tools to have a much bigger impact through policies than at the national level, thanks to the coordinated action of numerous countries.”

“This means that every citizen of any EU member state is also an EU citizen. They are united by common interests and an understanding of what Europe is and what opportunities are open to being a citizen of the European Union.”

Also, the respondents stated that EU Citizenship brings them *security and power*, and through this, a more *peaceful and prosperous Europe* will become. Another important aspect mentioned by the respondents is that EU citizenship provides a wide scale of opportunities, from abroad studies/youth exchanges to freedom of circulation.

It was clear right from the answers that the respondents emphasize with the official definition and that the additional rights such as voting, equality, and respecting cultural identity, are practiced in their country.

“For me, it is about the relationships between countries (social, economic, political, and environment), freedom of movement like Shengen's area, and the feeling of a European citizen to belong to the same culture even if each country has its language, and culture, history, and ethnicity considering that's a diversity of Europeans cultures who stand under one flag. “

“It means belonging to the supranational identity that brings together various and different cultures, but with a joint aim - peaceful and prosperous Europe.”

“The European citizenship allows me to move throughout the EU; enjoy the principle of equal treatment; participate actively in political life in numerous ways, enjoy consular protection, and contribute to the formulation of European policies.”

“It starts with a vote you have a right to stand for administrative, it means everything to me. It makes your voice to be heard, it helps you to make an impact, to learn, to grow, to educate, travel free learning about new cultures.”

“For me, it is a set of rights and obligations that guarantee the equality of the EU community.”

“While protecting its own cultural identity, being open to other cultures, striving to protect the world and Europe's peace and ecological balance, and supporting cooperation and exchange between states in production systems and economic fields.”

In terms of solidarity, European citizenship encouraged the respondents to move around Europe to study, volunteer or find work. These opportunities bring citizens close to the EU and its values. It provides an experience that changes the perspective and opens minds. Moreover, “the advantages of European citizenship allows for an exchange of knowledge and solidarity with very different peoples and cultures, but it allows us to have the same rights and duties.”

“I experienced it when I took part in European international projects and I could bond with people from all over Europe and understand their cultures and point of view in different matters”

“Yes, I have, quite often as I'm an international student. Having no problem crossing borders between France and Germany notably was a very comfortable way of traveling between these two countries. It means the liberty and simplicity of movement in the Schengen area. It also means comfortable ways to study/ work and leave in the member states, without numerous financial and administrative disadvantages faced by non-European nationals living in Europe.”

“My community cooperates in many projects with other EU countries. This promotes mutual understanding and closeness between the countries.”

“Recently in the integration of Ukrainian citizens in our environment/community.”

“In terms of Solidarity, we can find better jobs in other countries and still serve our country and show Solidarity to those less fortunate.”

Q2. Have you ever practiced European citizenship in your life? If so, could you explain when and how? What impact do you think it has in terms of Solidarity?

Moreover, the respondents mentioned that they've practiced their additional EU rights by traveling across Europe and voting in the European Parliamentary elections.

“Yes, also whit trips in the EU because there is the possibility to travel without special documents but only with Identity Card. I have known many cities with different cultures and I learned to respect them”

Economic Citizenship

Economic citizenship is a comprehensive concept that comprises a wide range of social and gender elements to attain economic norms and guarantee a more inclusive economic system for all citizens. It is citizenship by investment, a legal process that is built on empowerment, inclusion, and protection (Anon., s.d.).

The term “Economic Citizenship” refers to the way, through which people can improve economic and social well-being, by reducing income and asset poverty leading to sustainable livelihoods for children, youth, and adults.

In the view of respondents, Economic Citizenship is seen more as an economic welfare where citizens manage their budget and invest in different schemes (*“It means ‘citizenship by investment’; ‘Maybe economic support. Better distribution of resources and better management of the territory by investing’*), makes responsible purchases and easier transactions (*“Being part of a group of countries that have the same currency and makes easy to make transactions “*), coming in the end with the opportunity to safeguard family’s future (*“The possibility to create a new life in another country by contributing also to the local economy”*; *“Work to ensure that everyone has an economy that allows them to live as calmly as possible”*.)

“I believe economic citizenship is when you elevate the economy of a country you're not original from and you get citizenship because of that”

“Economic Citizenship means gathering of various communities for a joint economic enterprise within the framework of joint and unbiased economic rules.”

To gather up, Economic citizenship is seen by the respondents as “the set of skills and competencies that allows the citizen to also have knowledge of the economic system and be respectful of civil life, able to contribute to his own economic well-being and that of the community. Economic Citizenship transmits the essential skills to exercise full and authentic democratic citizenship in contemporary society.”

What has to be mentioned, is that not all the participants (N=12) knew or heard about “economic citizenship” nor understand the meaning of this concept.

Not all respondents practiced this citizenship in relationship with solidarity (N=28). Those who exercised this civic role were active in a broad range of social practices such as **grants management, tax payments, doing donations** (*“Yes. For the second year every month, I financially support the SOS Children’s Villages organization. It is support for communities who participate in our educational, training, healthcare and family strengthening programmes”*.) or **volunteering** (*“I invested my time by being a volunteer in a neighborhood association where most of children and adults have financial problems or life problems in general and I did my best to help children and teenager at school but also to make them have a positive mindset, for an adult it different because each one has his situation and the first thing is to make them feel confident and listen to them to help them and better guide them. I earned that helping economically is not only investing money in cash but there are other ways too because that time I could have devoted to working in exchange for money“*.)

Ecological Citizenship

Karatekin and Uysal (2018) mentioned in their study “Ecological Citizenship Scale development” that ecological citizenship is “a type of citizenship that encourages individuals, communities, and organizations as citizens of the world to consider environmental rights and responsibilities.” This concept has its base on four main dimensions: responsibility, sustainability, rights and justice, and participation. The citizens, who are involved in this environmental justice, are ecological citizens.

“Ecological Citizenship is important for creating eco-friendly and sustainable environment. To engage with common efforts to foster responsible and consistent changes for the sake of the environment. “

From the received answers, ecological citizenship is strongly connected to respect for the environment and the active participation of individuals in order to preserve the environment. An ecological citizen is conscious that the planet is not only theirs and that is also for future generations, and the action plans done today may have consequences in the future. Climate change is a worldwide issue and so, as citizens of the world, we must act and respond to it. The main responsibility is to ensure that the ecological footprint is sustainable.

“A lot. I am an environment specialist in my town and I am involved in ecological problems. In this area without citizenship, we can't sort the ecological problems in the world at all.”

“Awareness of the climate change and all of us need to do our part.”

“It means not wasting food, zero waste, intervening on school canteens, making room for farmers' markets to develop forms of critical consumption.”

“it is above all the awareness that the world is not ours, and we must take care of it and, if possible, leave it better than we found it.”

“I think that we all live on the same planet regardless of our nation of residence, so we should respect the environment and preserve it for the generations that will come next.”

“Trying to act and live in the most environmentally friendly way to protect our planet”

“Respect for the environment and sustainability.”

“It means making good practices for environmental protection and building an eco-sustainable world”

“Protection and survival of the ecological environment, action plans, projects related to renewable energy sources, environmental organizations, public and local government models include a wide range of technical and strategic issues such as environmental justice.”

Ecological citizen is responsible and fulfills their obligations as an active member of society, and acts with the aim to change and protect the environment, adopting a sustainable lifestyle. And so, the respondents mentioned that their ecological practices in terms of solidarity were in cleaning projects and actions, practicing sustainability by recycling, reduce the carbon footprint/food waste and consumption.



I have participated in actions such as environmental clean-ups, which I thought were an interesting means of bringing people together to care for shared spaces.

I could provide an example of ecological citizenship with the "Darom" action carried out in our country. During which residents voluntarily collect garbage in public spaces. This project has a very significant impact on the community of the villagers and the achievement of the goal.

Yes, there are many actions in my city to promote environmental behaviors, for instance, the city hall promotes the creation of urban vegetable gardens where citizens grow their products and meet in these green spaces

I use public transport for traveling, recycling, buying second-hand clothes, and not eating meat

Practicing an ecological mindset for me is more daily. I don't use a plastic bag, I save energy at home, I take public transport most of the time and I try to sensitize my friends and family members who are not engaged at all and of course influence children around me to have the right reflexes. In terms of solidarity I think doing this is just the beginning of the awareness then it gets bigger and bigger.

Yes, I try to. I try not to waste food and buy in an aware way, I do a proper separate collection. I think it has a great impact in terms of solidarity because a network of small aids is created between citizens, which allows everyone to support each other.

As recent studies show, the extent of ecological problems, especially climate change, drastic loss of biodiversity, air, soil, and water pollution, and deforestation are so serious that it is said that without fundamental changes, both at the individual and global level, humanity faces a rather bleak future. Since ecological problems directly depend on the growing number of the Earth's population, the question of how to encourage ordinary citizens to contribute to the solution of ecological problems through their actions and choices, rather than deepening them, becomes more relevant than ever. therefore, our family actively participates in pollution reduction processes, we sort waste, do not use plastic, and encourage others to do the same. We participate in various promotions, bike rides, etc.

Reducing consumption is a great way to reduce our carbon footprint and take a political stance by rejecting our consumerist culture.



As Andrew C. Reykin said in The New York Times article, “Ecological citizenship is the framework in which we can see both the need for individual responsibility and the absurdity in laying the onus of responsibility on the individual, both the ecology that sustains communities and the sustainability demanded from communities in order to maintain a balanced ecology.”

Digital Citizenship

The concept of digital citizenship means to participate in democracy through the internet. Access to the internet has changed the way we receive information. The era of digital citizenship plays a high role in engaging in democratic life because citizens are more active and discuss more often on social media or other online platforms.

The term digital citizenship has been defined by the respondents as “that set of rights and duties that aims to simplify the relationship between citizens, businesses, and public administration through digital technologies.” It means “being connected through technology”, ensuring digital security, and the opportunity to work from and for other countries. So, the digital citizen is seen as a person “who has the knowledge and skills to effectively use digital technologies to communicate with others, participate in society, and create and consume digital content.”

So, “Digital citizenship is about confident and positive engagement with digital technologies.”

“Ability to safely and responsibly access digital technologies, as well as being an active and respectful member of society.”

“To have ethical and correct behavior in an online environment and respect others.”

“A component of civic awareness that aims at educating citizens to work, live and share in digital environments in a positive way.”

“The conscious way we use the digital means we have at our disposal.”

A question arises because as studies have shown, internet access is not available for all communities, so are we in the pursuit of equality? How can we engage all citizens with the nowadays democracy? This is also visible from the responses since 24 persons do not know or never practiced digital citizenship.

The active digital citizens have mentioned that practiced their role in the relationship with solidarity within their work to facilitate collaboration (via online conferences) and remote working as a result of the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other practices are in the field of education and training, research, and information and communication purposes.

“Yes, when making videoconferences collaborating with NGOs to help other people.”

“Yes, through training and projects that address the issue of digital citizenship and raise awareness of the wise and positive use of social networks and the internet.”

“The way we use it daily for productive and mutual aid purposes, and to break down existing barriers, namely in terms of the loneliness of the elderly, elders.”

“By helping parents use internet access, I practice digital citizenship, which I believe promotes solidarity and cooperation.”

“I continuously experience digital citizenship, buying online, using all digital devices, and exchanging information and documents. It has a great impact on solidarity as it allows those who have not been able and do not have the opportunity to be known and taught. And we have a duty to bridge this digital divide.”

“Digital citizens should be people who can use e-government applications, shop, receive online education, comply with ethical rules while performing these behaviors, and are aware of their rights and responsibilities.”

“Yes. Sometimes I share links to online petitions that support animal rights. At the same time, it can be understood as an act of solidarity, as I share my thoughts with the community and encourage them to sign.”



Global Citizenship

The concept of Global Citizenship goes back in time to the creation process of the United Nations in 1945, continuing with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement in 2015. Now it plays an important role in our society, global citizens acting beyond geographical limits, defending human dignity, and promoting international solidarity (Bachelet, 2018).

The United Nations states that global citizenship is "the umbrella term for social, political, environmental, and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale."

As European citizenship was seen by the respondents, also Global citizenship is perceived as "inspired by the feeling of belonging to a large community and common humanity. It emphasizes political, economic, social, and cultural interdependence, and the interconnectedness of the local, the national, and the global" having a great impact on Solidarity.

Common points with European Citizenship were noticed in the participants' answers, global citizenship is a feeling of belonging and sharing respect, and having a global goal.

"This refers to the idea that the population forms a common whole having the same rights and duties, irrespective of national divisions, and which places the interest of this human whole above local or national interests."

"Global citizenship means that every place it's my home no matter where I'm from where I was born, and every person who's trying to make the world a better place, to bring peace, and happiness is global citizenship for me. "

As mentioned by the respondents, a global citizen is "someone aware of and understands the wider world – and their place in it. They are a citizen of the world. They take an active role in their community and work with others to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable, and fairer."

Because global citizenship acts without border limits, some respondents mentioned that they've practiced it through traveling, working, volunteering, and sharing experiences within different opportunities and collaborations, but also by raising awareness in their community and not only. This awareness raising is necessary since 21 respondents mentioned that they have never practiced global citizenship.

"Yes, living and working in Africa, I had the chance to work with an Association for Autism. It was fulfilling."

"I suppose that when I have carried out help actions with people who have needs."

"Yes. At this time, in the face of war, our community helps refugees from Ukraine settle in our country. The more we stand in solidarity with each other as a family, the more united we are in our fight for justice and peace."

"Yes, I even think Global citizenship. I learn more languages and a new way of thinking. For me, solidarity should be practiced globally. Humans are still human, there is no difference, a European who is suffering from the same thing as an African should be considered the same. One of them doesn't feel less whatever his life's experience, so we have to be in solidarity with everyone. All that happening in the world for earth's citizens could happen to anyone of us in other circumstances."

"Yes. With my songwriting and in my bands. We played to everyone with those values."

"When sharing my culture and taking interest/helping other cultures to develop."

"Yes, as a national of Morocco living in France, witnessing the presence of these same values that were instilled in me in France reinforced the conviction that this notion exists and that the same social, political, environmental, and economic actions are undertaken by societies and people around the world."

How the 5 Citizenships and Solidarity are interconnected

SOLIDARITY is the founding principle of the European Union and it is considered a key element for solving problems strictly related to cohesion and integration, especially nowadays, in times of crisis. Active Citizenship can help in implementing and promoting Solidarity initiatives, but citizens need to learn more about the EU policies and programmes and learn more about the instruments they are given to actively contribute to the social growth of the Union, by having their voice heard at every level.

In the Lisbon conference of the European Council (23-24 March 2000), new entrances for the European Union were defined. Objective: "Building an economy based on knowledge, for better job placements and greater social cohesion". For the EU it is necessary "to identify and define the key competencies for personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social cohesion, and employability in a knowledge-based society". In the concept of "social cohesion", Active Citizenship pays off as a fundamental competence. In order to achieve social cohesion, active relationships are needed: a network of exchanges of information, promotion of solidarity, and involvement of all the stakeholders in Civic Participation. This inclusive process of civil society consolidates the sense of identity and belonging to a community. Social cohesion is an indicator of civil progress, as it creates favorable relationships that not only lead to a better democracy, but also to better economic development. Active Citizenship and conscious participation in social life represent "the glue" in a cohesive society. Education for civic citizenship does not take place only at school, as it is a mixture of formal and informal learning throughout the entire life. We are therefore in the presence of lifelong learning and education, where cities, meant as learning environments, have a key role. Moreover, The ONU AGENDA 2030 defines a new strategy of action that requires a "universal" and "indivisible" commitment that concerns everyone, acting, inextricably and simultaneously, on all the 17 Goals contained in the Agenda.

To properly understand the 2030 Agenda it is necessary to clarify the new paradigm of "sustainable development", and abandon the idea that this is relegated solely to an environmental issue. Sustainable development is defined as a development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In fact, the 17 Goals concern all the aspects of human life and the planet and are based on an integrated vision of 3 dimensions: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

In this scenario, YES! intends to elect interdisciplinarity as the key to fostering Active Citizenship for Solidarity purposes, thanks to the acquisition of specific competencies coming from different sectors, from Ecology to Economy, from ICT to Participatory Democracy and Social Cohesion. The project partners will allow their 26 young citizens to acquire specific competencies in each of the 5 Active Citizenship sectors (Economic, European, Ecologic, Digital, and Global) and become the European Solidarity Animators (ESAs), acting in their respective communities, for promoting solidarity opportunities (through VOLUNTEERING, with European Solidarity Corps, EVS and EuropeAid programmes, among all), while testing the existing tools for have a say at EU level (Participatory Democracy) and proposing new ones.

What is Solidarity

Solidarity is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union, reflected also in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Chapter IV, articles 27 to 38. On a larger scale, as was seen these days and years, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the War in Ukraine, and other crisis, countries contribute more funds to the system, so that in case of this kind of disaster, solidarity is practiced within Europe.



Solidarity, in the respondents' perspective, is the outcome of the relationship between individuals, relying on mutual care, and commitment. Solidarity is viewed as togetherness, standing for people and supporting each other, without expecting to receive something in return.

“It means a feeling of social closeness, empathy, and an ability to relate to others that inspires civic activism.”

“The Act of giving your time to others, helping them with respect and positivity. - Helping each other, in every aspect areas, making us feeling human beings.”

“Helping someone in a situation of need. Giving more than you receive. Having an impact in someone's life in a good way without expecting something in return.”

“It is a human value and a way to help another person unselfishly.”

“Solidarity is a feeling of availability and sharing towards each other, of material and moral help among the people of a group, of a community.”

“It is an example of solidarity that all living things overcome problems by acting with each other. As a social being, man cannot live alone by nature. They learn to do business together, they can complete the work more quickly and easily by helping each other. Each person's skills and ingenuity may differ from the other.”

In practice, solidarity can be an act of voluntary participation in different initiatives, or to provide financial and/or material support, all having at the bottom the fight for rights. Solidarity can be an act of returning to others who once, helped you.

From the received answers, it can be said that the majority of respondents experienced at least once in their lifetime solidarity and also practiced it either in their community or at the international level

through EU programmes such as European Solidarity Corps. For them, solidarity “is a common feeling in everyday life between family members, co-workers or community members.”

Thanks to solidarity, the community becomes stronger as the residents come closer and encourages others to share their time with and help each other when needed.



At my school, we would always collect food, clothing, and money to support different charities that helped disadvantaged children.

I have experience solidarity in various forms, for example, when the community I live in collects funds for a person who is sick and in need of medical treatment. I think it shows the capacity for people to be moved to come to the assistance of people in need, and in general, inspires feelings of membership in a wider community.

Solidarity has various meanings to many people, but in general, there is common sense among members of a certain community. To me, the example of solidarity among members of the local community is the local initiatives that aim to help those who are in need of financial aid. It brings people together but also helps those who are in need.

I was a blood donor, it's the most rewarding experience when we help others in need.

Yes, I did it; as a teenager, I participated with my parish in solidarity events and meetings. I had the opportunity to meet immigrants, drug addicts, women victims of violence, and orphaned children; we collected food and clothing for them and listened to their stories and their lives. all things that have left signs and teachings over the years.

The war in Ukraine showed the whole of Europe and the world how important it is to be in solidarity and responsibility. Therefore, I actively participated in the collection of support for war refugees.

I experience Solidarity quite often. The most recent act of Solidarity was (and is) the solidarity of the people of Lithuania to provide assistance to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people because of war.

Recently, but as many times I've done before, I sent 6 trucks of humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

Yes, I live in an area where there are many multicultural communities and migrants, local people organized free French classes and events to include them in local communities.

Yes, it was during the period of lockdown due to COVID-19, I participated as a volunteer in the setting up of an emergency shelter for refugees where we provided them with food, first aid, and psychological support to live through this complicated period. I think this experience has helped me to refocus and connect with others by helping others and doing good around me. In general, I think that solidarity is one of the best ways to build a more equitable world through mutual support.

During the war in Kosovo, I was a refugee in Albania and Northern Macedonia. Volunteers provided us with food and shelter. That level of solidarity will never be forgotten, and it has made a strong bond between the people I got to know and me.

Through soup kitchens operated by SYDVs in regions with high unemployment and poverty. The daily food needs of citizens are met. Apart from this, the needs of the citizens for reasons such as natural disasters, fires, and terrorism are also provided through foundations.



Solidarity in everyday life can be manifested in many ways, from individual consumer choices to militant or associative commitment, participating in the life of one's neighborhood, community or university can be a good start, by opting for a responsible way of life, by volunteering in a local association or through participatory democracy, which today allows for the sharing and exercising of power, based on the reinforcement of citizens' political decision-making within the framework of representative democracy.

All the before mentioned Citizenships support the growth of a community and raising awareness of Solidarity and promoting it at the local level, finding a way to look beyond the bounded community, perspectives must be changed, and the change can come only through education and by changing yourself - *"People could above all start from themselves, improving their own experiences and knowledge, opening their minds to different lifestyles"*. – You, as a citizen need to start listening to the one next to you and have an open mind to understand what life is.

Another aspect that citizens could do in promoting Solidarity is to engage directly in the decision-making process, in the political life, in other words, to be active at civic level - *"In my experience, the most important element of local activism is direct engagement in decision-making processes and in issues that directly affect the overall health and wellbeing of local communities. An example of this can be a group of neighbors getting together to create a petition to improve street lighting or refuse collection in a certain neighborhood."* - Besides this, the approach must come not only from citizens but also from the local stakeholders - *"Approaches that include the public and civil society should become widespread. Local governments are the focus and main stakeholders of policies and practices related to youth. In the activities of the municipalities for the youth; policy and strategy documents, educational support, skills development, increasing political and social participation, personal development support, encouraging volunteering, cooperation with stakeholders, developing employment, the inclusion of different youth segments, and youth-sensitive budgeting forms the framework."* –

"First of all, I think you should join a local community organization, and if there isn't one, initiate its establishment. Currently, many projects and events take place through community organizations. Being in an organization allows you to discuss, propose ideas and thus promote community and solidarity."

"RAISE AWARENESS, ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION & LISTEN. Share newcomer stories to encourage empathy, build solidarity, and challenge the dominant narrative about migration."

The Recommendations

The challenge of how to build a more active and cohesive community at local, national, and international levels was of high interest for YES! project and this is the reason why the participants were asked how the role of an active citizen could be achieved, what individuals should practice, and what tools should use.

Being active citizens and being one step ahead toward a healthy society means getting involved in your community and democracy at all levels. This role in society is grounded in action, responsibility, and democratic values.

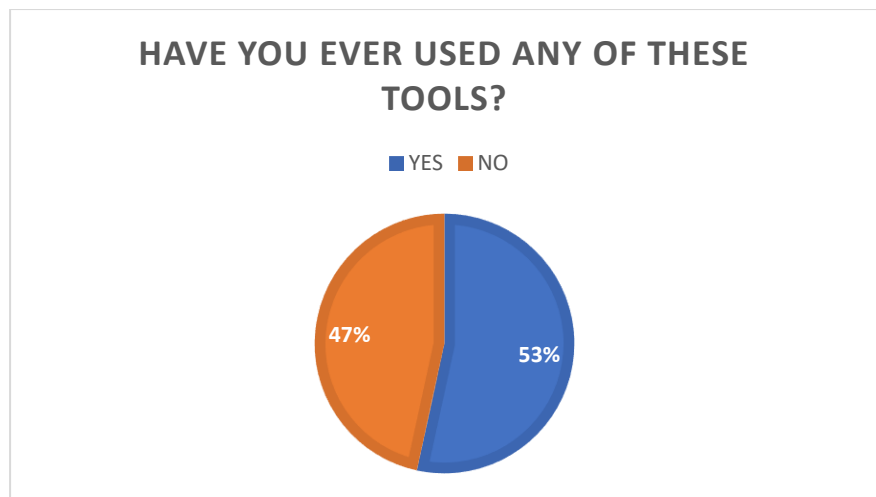
Knowing and understanding the political, and socio-economical context helps individuals in making informed decisions to make the right change.

Here's a list of tools proposed by the respondents so that citizens could use it to have a say at the local, national, and EU levels:

1. Voting
2. Youth for Democracy
3. Public debates
4. Social media platforms where you can also express your opinion
5. Petitions
6. Participation in budget planning sessions (*"At the local level in France some cities give the opportunity to citizens to choose how to use the budget of the city"*)
7. Digital platforms
8. NGOs, Schools, Local Authorities
9. Attending/following parliamentary committee meetings
10. Contacting Assembly Members
11. Attending sessions of local municipal organs (i.e. local assemblies).
12. International Human Rights Instruments for instance.
13. Activism
14. Solidarity projects
15. PO APMC Campaigns (Programa Operacional de Apoio as Pessoas Mais Carenciadas)
16. Promotion and information
17. European projects
18. Have your say
19. Participation in surveys
20. Salto youth
21. Eurodesk
22. European platforms

These tools were used by majority of the respondents (53,4%)

By taking part in this kind of action, individuals understood and manifested response, obligation, or duty towards a more active society, becoming more open-minded.



The respondents said that *“Thanks to these projects I had a deeper understanding of cultures different than mine. Activities of working together like listening and sharing one story helped to get to know each other better, to understand our needs and our problems and it helped to make a list with a priority to work straight them.”*

The right to vote remained the fundamental element of participation, that allowed people to exercise their citizenship by participating in the election of their representatives at the local, national, and European levels. This exercise made participants feel satisfied their voice was heard *“Since I was able to legally vote, I've used my voice to elect parties or candidates.”*

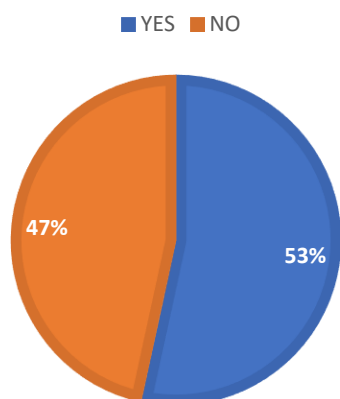
How could the different stakeholders (NGOs, Schools, Local Authorities, etc.) give their contribution in building a more supportive and inclusive EU?

Stakeholders can influence the decision-making process. They represent the link between the EU and citizens. They ensure that the organizational work environment remains dynamic, stimulating, and rewarding and there are good working conditions available in the organization so that the organization can perform well. Engaging different stakeholders help in informing at the local level, of the decisions and provide the support needed for long-term sustainability. Specifically, stakeholder engagement can help by:

- Empowering people
- Involving in the decision-making process.
- Creating a sustainable change
- Disseminating the information, programmes, actions, projects, etc.
- Creating international partnerships and inviting the community to be a part of
- Supporting and educating the community about the EU Values and their programmes
- Educating and Training youth through different projects that promote art and culture, and not only. School is one of the most important institutions that can educate and train young people on the importance to exercise civic responsibilities and support inclusion.
- Improving communication at the grass route level, explaining the situation of those in need, and not being judgmental.
- Organizing more charitable events and working with students and citizens at the grassroots.
- Reaching more people through social networks
- Giving more voice to young people

A particular recommendation was that *“The EU can be more responsive to citizens' needs by engaging more closely and frequently (and in a more structured manner) with local institutions and non-governmental organizations, this would allow them to cater their funding to local needs rather than the other way around.”*

DO YOU THINK THE EU DOES ENOUGH IN THE FIELD OF SOLIDARITY?



Even though the majority (53.4%) of respondents agreed with the fact the EU does enough in the field of Solidarity, a quite high percentage (46.6%) answered with “no”. Taking this into consideration, participants were asked to tell us what EU could do more or differently for its citizens in the field of Solidarity.

The most common answers were structured within these topics:

- **Finances:** “More financial support”; “Capital investment”; “more financial help for people in poor situations, more access to culture and to entertainment and facilities to travel around Europe”; “Strongly address the problem of increasing financial, educational and citizenships inequalities and rebalance the opportunities and rights equally”
- **Funds management without so much bureaucracy:** “More support without bureaucracies. Another framework of control funds would help more to the funds having a direct impact in solidarity”; “Less bureaucracy, more action, and smaller budget projects with easier access to more youngsters.
- **Be more active at the local level / rural areas and listen to the reality:** “The EU is an oblique organization that often appears to be a bureaucratic monstrosity that is out-of-touch with the realities that most people live in. It first and foremost needs to be more active and visible at the local level, and those working for it need to familiarize themselves more closely with local developments.”; “More presence in the rural and little levels”;
- **Better communication strategy:** “Better promote the tools that already exist to boost solidarity in Europe”; “Disseminate and promote access to its actions and programmes involving young people”, “Find support networks and share experiences with more young people. Facilitate meetings between young people.”; “2 EU pieces of information doesn't arrive in a little country like mine, a lot of occasions are not known by the citizens“
- **More grassroots initiatives:** “The EU should invest more in local grassroots initiatives that are in line with common EU values, but are focused on the benefit of local peoples.”
- **Support the educational system:** “Europe, as a solidarity, should support our talented youth in our country, contribute to their education and send them back to our country”, “It should improve the promotion of scientific and technological progress. Fight against social exclusion and discrimination. Promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, and the protection of the rights of the child. Strengthen economic, social, and territorial cohesion and solidarity between EU countries.”
- **Be more inclusive:** “Inclusivity is the key.”
- **More opportunities that promote bilateral cooperation:** “Increase bilateral cooperation promoting active citizenship.”; “Care for Kosovo more”; “Giving no EU citizens chance to collaborate, to train, for a short time in EU states”; create more opportunities for citizens to travel more easily between EU countries”
- **Fairtrade:** “I think the EU is a fortress that is hard to penetrate from the outside. Agriculture policy EU policies favor EU members and provide unnecessary subventions while those, not EU members suffer from selling their products. In some cases, EU products are destroyed but not shared with developing countries to protect the so-called “market”.

To give a stronger impact and strengthen the policies in the field of Solidarity, respondents proposed to the EU Institutions the followings:

OPEN COMMUNICATION

“Communicate more about its actions without using jargon”; “open a communication office to illustrate to citizens all the ways that EU can help improve the quality of their lives even in small ways”; “More people working in the youth field. More voice to the youth in decision-making processes.”

FINANCES

“Economic projects, capital investments”; “more money in education and more exchange. Continue to finance European local projects and encourage more local connection between countries”; “We should focus on increasing the funds of the Erasmus+ program, for more young people to have the opportunity to feel that experience.”; “Create a special fund for solidarity for emergency cases”

MORE SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

“We need more social programs that we can be involved in to promote solidarity, and to participate more actively.”

OPPORTUNITIES AND GRANTS

“For companies, young people, etc.” I think we should promote citizens' learning and train young people, create spaces suitable for involving everyone.”; “create more opportunities for citizens to travel more easily between EU countries”; “Give more support to ESC programmes that can allow more youngsters to develop solidarity projects in the EU space.”; “protection of workers rights and safety - investing in local initiatives (better green local infrastructure)”; “Get more involved with culture”

ENLARGE THE EU BORDERS

“Include Kosovo in European community”; “Involving more no UE citizenship would be a great start.”

NEW MIGRATION POLICIES

“Change your migration policies and integrate faster migrants traveling to the EU”

RULES APPLIANCE

“Legal rules that must be applied in the same way in every EU country”

POLICIES

Strengthen European prerogatives to provide a stronger, faster, and more coordinated response throughout Europe.

PROMOTING THE EU VALUES

“peace and security and respecting fundamental rights and freedoms”; “Create a common solidarity base allowing all Member States to comply with commonly defined guidelines, and involve young people in decisions by providing them with all the information necessary for their commitment. Also, introduce courses on European values and solidarity in schools.”; “Promote the values of the Union and the well-being of its citizens. Fight against social exclusion and discrimination. Creating an internal market.

STRENGTHEN COOPERATIONS

“They should strengthen the relations with local institutions, schools, organizations to reach more easily people on the local level”

“create local solidarity organizations in EU countries”

“By creating groups with leaders, who will record in a single digital system automatically the needs and the problems.”

A particular request came from the UK that said the “UK to open more to the EU and for the EU to open more doors to the UK”.

It was highlighted that educational programmes need to be focused more on improving competencies such as cooperation and communication, but also critical skills, reducing prejudice, and building a more understanding, empathic, and open to diversity society.

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