

Study on Active Citizenship Education

DG Education and Culture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The importance of active citizenship as part of lifelong and lifewide learning is widely acknowledged, and is being increasingly recognised in education and training. However, little is known about **how** active citizenship education works, and whether there are common strategies which lead to successful practice. The idea behind the study presented in this report, was to look at active citizenship from a qualitative viewpoint. The study is based on an extensive literature review and a pan-European search for good practices in the area of active citizenship education. More than 100 practices were identified, 57 of these practices underwent a detailed examination, involving direct contact with persons responsible for their success. Finally, case study visits were organised to take an extensive in-depth view on 10 selected practices. This report pulls all this activity and information together.

Understanding of Active Citizenship Education

The study aimed to explore all possible facets of active citizenship education by choosing a highly varied sample of examples, including all target groups, both in terms of age and socio-economic features, and all types of education. The analysis of the practices was further supported by a review of trends, identified through existing research. Based on both elements, active citizenship education can be understood as a process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes and skills based on community values.

Main findings from the analysis of 57 good practice examples and 10 case studies

The overall mandate for identifying good practices in active citizenship education was to ensure coverage of 33 countries, various types of education, education providers, target groups, themes, types of activities, methods, etc. The studied sample targeted groups from society at large, among them teacher trainers; administrators, ethnic minorities, immigrants other vulnerable groups. Small projects involving less than 20 participants to projects reaching over 2000 people were included.

From the variety of themes it becomes clear that active citizenship is not only about exercising civil rights and democracy but also about socio-cultural issues, including the integration of minorities and including multicultural issues. Empowerment and "giving people a voice" as well as taking responsibility and leadership were frequent topics.

The vast majority of all practices reviewed, included an awareness raising component, often in combination with an element of activating the participants, such as "learning by doing", "discussions or debate, or "learning new skills". Nearly one third of the practices aimed to activate people in the near future by focusing on expanding their contacts and networking.

In terms of results and outcomes, most practices reported a change in the attitude of their participants as the most common effect of their activity. It is the most direct effect that active citizenship education can have. Another result often mentioned was the acquisition of new skills by individuals and their activation through further involvement. In a number of cases, the practice resulted in the development of new products, such as educational material, handbooks but also artistic objects. Other practices led to the creation of new organisations or networks

Success factors – what works, where and why in promoting active citizenship?

When asked which factors contributed most to the success of the projects, most interviewees cited the democratic involvement of participants, followed by the method used and the personal motivation of the participants. This confirms that the participants themselves are key to the success of activities - the more influence they have on the organisation of activities the more they commit to project.

Governance is a key issue for successful active citizenship education: most methods used by projects required the involvement of participants in a democratic way and included aspects of self-regulation.

Partnership building was a very common element in the majority of examples reviewed. The vast majority practices also involved the wider community, especially those that were of mixed implementation levels, providing mixed types of education and working with mixed age groups.

Conclusions and recommendations – developing activities to promote active citizenship

The conclusions and recommendations follow the lifecycle of a project from its conception to completion.

Planning a project. It is useful to undertake a mapping or needs assessment prior to setting up a project, to better understand what the potential partners consider

important, what their educational needs are, and what their level of existing knowledge is.

Developing the methodological approach and project strategy. When developing a methodological approach, it is important to consider what effects the educational process should achieve. Whatever method is chosen, it will greatly benefit from involving the participants in its use and elaboration, and letting them “steer” the work programme

Setting up management and coordination structures. Small-scale local projects benefit from a single interlocutor which may make use of specific inputs when required. Projects that are more complex and with wider coverage benefit from working with partners which complement each other in terms of expertise and skills, or establish a central management function while leaving the specific design and implementation to individual partners.

Working with partners. Partnerships serve to put the project on the map, to raise awareness, and support the involvement of the wider community. Partners can have expert thematic or technical knowledge. It is important to predefine what is expected from the partners and agree on roles and responsibilities at a very early stage.

Involving the wider community. Community involvement is an essential aspect of active citizenship and has a multiplier effect. Especially projects at local and regional level should place particular efforts on establishing contacts with their surroundings.

Making projects a lasting success. Projects should at an early stage focus on transferring these practices to other organisations and to a wider context.

Active Citizenship Education study

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/citizensedu.pdf>

Comenius

European Cooperation on School Education

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/comenius/index_en.html

ERASMUS

the European Community programme in the field of higher education

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/erasmus_en.html

GRUNDTVIG

EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/grundtvig/index_en.html

Leonardo Da Vinci programme

The European Programme for Vocational Education and Training

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/leonardo/index_en.html