



Project: 2020-2-BG01-KA205-079486 Creativity and Innovation for Active Citizenship (CIAC), *co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union*

***RESEARCH REPORT ON YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS
CITIZENSHIP, CIVIC EDUCATION AND YOUTH
PARTICIPATION***

FROM THE KORENYAK FOUNDATION

According to project: 2020-2-BG01-KA205-079486 Creativity and Innovation for Active Citizenship (CIAC) with leading organization "OMEGA" (Bulgaria), partners Korenjak Foundation and "DRUSTVO ZA RAZVIJANJE PROSTOVOLJNEGA DELA NOVO MESTO" (Slovenia).

The project is implemented under the Erasmus + program, KA 2 Strategic partnerships



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Introduction

The report was prepared within the framework of project 2020-2-BG01-KA205-079486 Creativity and Innovation for Active Citizenship (CIAC) under the Erasmus+ program, with leading organization "OMEGA" (Kardzhali, Bulgaria), partners "Korenyak" Foundation (Sofia, Bulgaria) and "DRUSTVO ZA RAZVIJANJE PROSTOVOLJNEGA DELA NOVO MESTO" (Slovenia).

The main objective of the project is to support the (positive) attitude of young people to influence decisions in democratic processes - be it at national, regional or local level - and to increase their participation in the development of inclusive and peaceful societies.

Preparation and conduct of the study

For the purposes of the study, a questionnaire was developed consisting of 22 questions, conditionally divided into two thematic sections: basic information and citizenship, civic education and youth participation. The questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms.

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information about the attitudes of young people towards citizenship, civic education and youth participation. 51 respondents were reached.

Methods of gathering information

The main focus of the study is young people aged 15-29 in the Sofia area. In order to successfully reach them and optimally gather information, as well as in view of the epidemiological situation and the effective measures against the spread of Covid-19, the Korenyak Foundation team chose to conduct the survey entirely online, using modern communication channels popular among young people. The questionnaire, prepared with the help of Google forms, was published on social networks, including on the Facebook page of the Foundation. Access to it was completely free.

Link to the Facebook page of the Foundation:

<https://bg-bg.facebook.com/pages/category/Non-Governmental-Organization--NGO>

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Target audience

The main target group of the survey was young people between the ages of 15 and 29, mainly residing in the Sofia region and Sofia Municipality.

Description

A total of 51 respondents were reached, with over 92% living in the city of Sofia, and the rest - in populated areas in the region of the municipality. The highest percentage reached are young people in the age range of 20-25 years.

Results of a survey

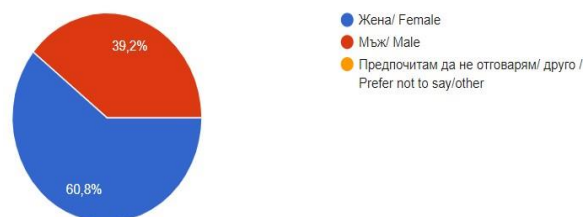
Section 1 – Basic Information

Young people aged 20-25 (60.8%) and between 15-19 (23.5%) took part in the survey. The rest are between 26-30 years old (13.7%) and over 30 years old (2%). Of which 60.8% are women and 39.2% men.

The Korenjak Foundation mainly works with young people, so the answers are predominantly in this age range. The young people who follow the Facebook page are from different settlements, such as those who took part in the survey:

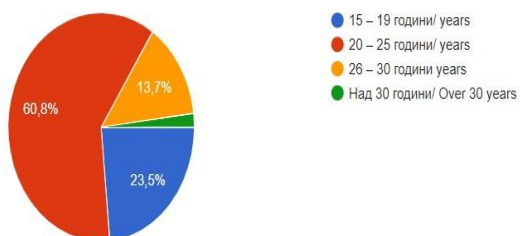
- 92.2% live permanently in the capital;
- 3.9% live in a large settlement;
- 3.9% live in a small settlement.

1. Пол? / Gender?
51 отговора



2. На колко си години? / How old are you?

51 отговора



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3. Живееш постоянно в:/ Place of residence:

51 отговора

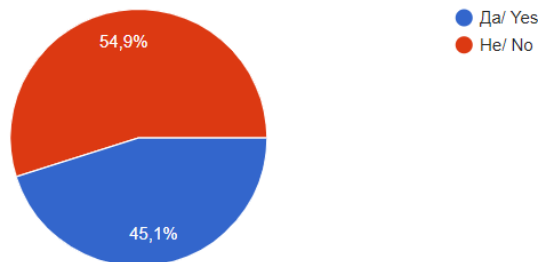


Section 2 - citizenship, civic education and youth participation.

The majority of young people (54.9%) do not talk to their family and relatives about their civil and political rights, but the percentage that says they do (45.1%) is also very high.

4. Разговаряш ли с родителите и близките си за твоите граждански и политически права?/ Are you talking with your parents and relatives about your civil and political rights?

51 отговора



100% of the respondents are unanimous in their opinion that the young citizen has rights and responsibilities towards the society in which he lives.

5. Според теб младият гражданин:/ According to you, the young citizen:

51 отговора

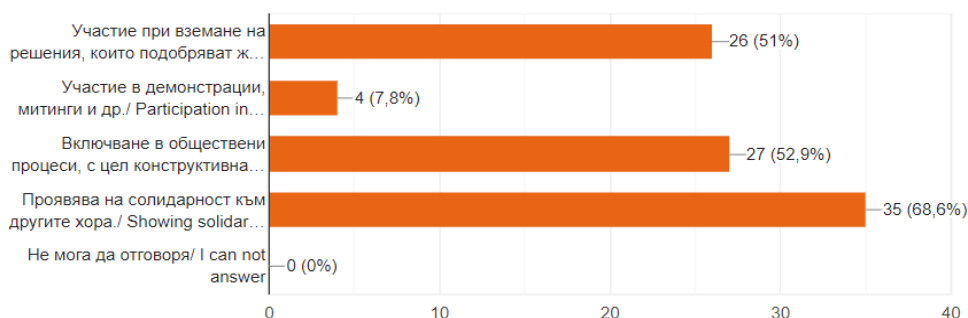


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Mainly the young people from the survey think that to be an active citizen means first of all to show solidarity with other people (68.6%). In the second place in the ranking of the young people surveyed is the involvement in social processes, with the aim of constructive change (52.9%). A large percentage also noted participation in making decisions that improve the life of the community (51%). The least noted characteristic of the active citizen among the young people reached is the participation in demonstrations, rallies, etc., only 7.8%.

6. Какво означава според теб да си активен гражданин (допустимо е повече от един отговор):/ What do you think active citizenship means (more than one answer is allowed):

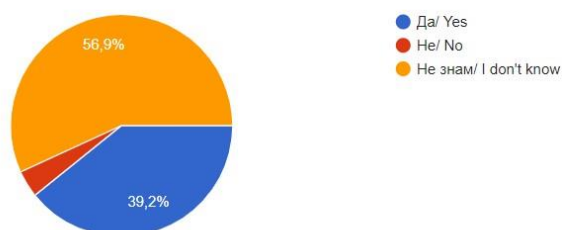
51 отговора



Unfortunately, 3.9% do not feel prepared to deal with a situation in which their rights are violated, and 56.9% are not sure. Only 39.2 of the respondents answered "Yes".

7. Смяташ ли се подготвен/а да се справиш със ситуация, в която се нарушават правата ти?/ Do you consider yourself prepared to deal with a situation in which your rights are violated?

51 отговора



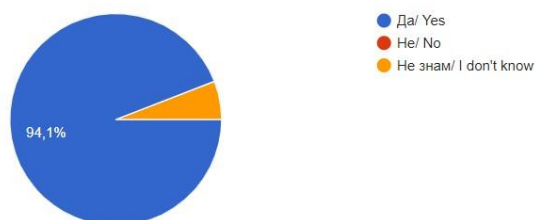
The positive thing is that the participants of the study confirm that to be an active citizen it is essential to know the laws, rights and obligations. However, there are those who cannot determine - 5.9%.



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8. Смяташ ли, че е от съществено значение да познаваш законите, правата и задълженията си, за да бъдеш активен гражданин?/ Do you think that knowing the rights, laws and obligations makes us more active in society?

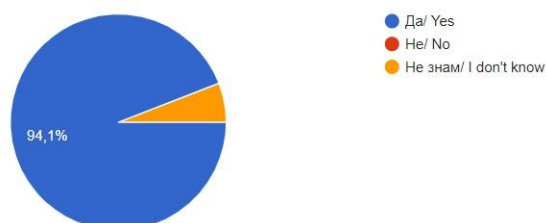
51 отговора



According to 94.1% of the youth, the introduction of civic education in school will give them more knowledge and confidence in their communication with various institutions. None answered "No", but 3.9% could not determine.

9. Смяташ ли, че въвеждането на гражданско образование в училище ще ти даде повече знания и увереност в комуникацията ти с различни институции?/ Do you think that introducing civic education in schools will give you more knowledge and confidence when interacting with various institutions?

51 отговора



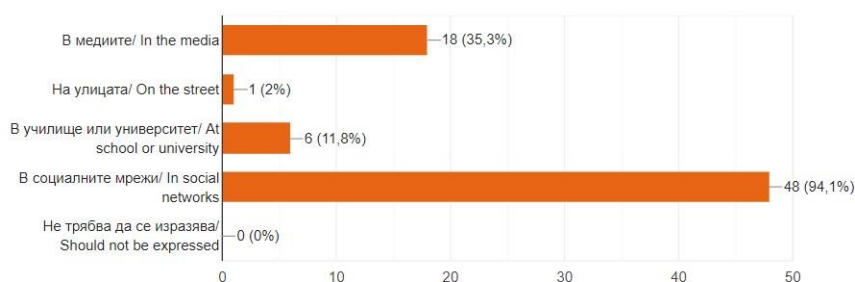
Statistics from the survey show that young people are most likely to express their opinion on public issues on social networks (94.1%), and 35.3% prefer the media. The smallest percentage (2%) of young people would express their opinion on the street and only 11.8% in school. The positive thing is that everyone feels it is necessary to express their opinion, regardless of the place.



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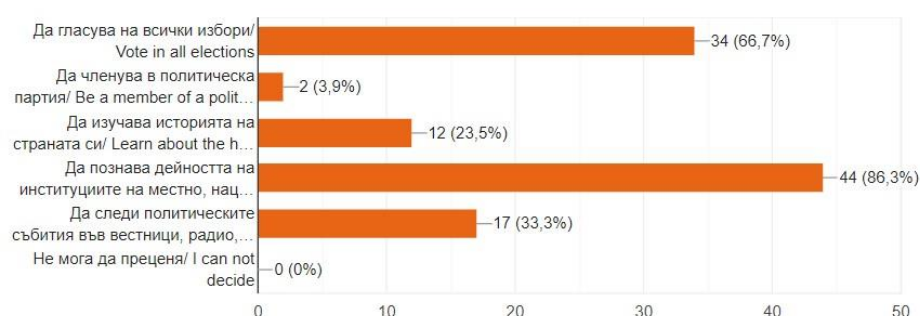
10. Като млад гражданин, къде би избрал да изразиш твоето лично мнение по обществен въпрос? (възможни са повече от един отговор)/ As a young person, where would you choose to express your personal opinion on a public issue? (more than one answer is possible):

51 отговора



11. Според теб активният граждани трябва : (посочи до 3 отговора)/ In your opinion, good citizens should (indicate up to 3 answers):

51 отговора



Young people believe that an active citizen should first of all know the activities of the institutions at the local, national and European level (86.3%), as well as vote in all elections (66.7%). A large percentage (23.5%) say that, in addition to the above, it is necessary to know the history of their country and to follow political events in newspapers, radio, TV and the Internet (33.3%). An interesting fact is the negligibly low share (only 3.9%) of those who marked membership in a political party as an important aspect of being an active citizen.

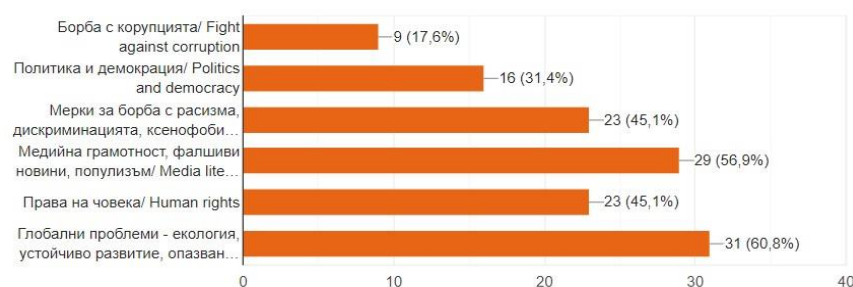
Regarding topics from the field of Civic Education, the greatest interest (60.8%) was reported for global problems - ecology, sustainable development, peacekeeping, poverty, etc. Another important topic according to the participants is that of media literacy, fake news, populism (56.9%). With an equal number of percentages (45.1%) of interest from the participants are the topics of Measures to fight racism, discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism and Human Rights.

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The motivating factor is that 98% would like to have special training on the above-mentioned topics regardless of where - school, university or extracurricular forms.

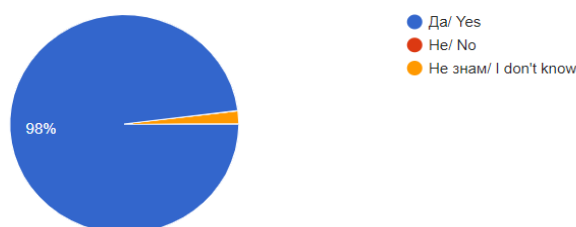
12. Кои от темите от областта на Гражданското образование представляват най- голям интерес за теб: (посочи до 3 отговора)/ Which of the topics in the field of Civic Education are of the greatest interest to you (indicate up to 3 answers):

51 отговора



13. Искаш ли да има специални обучения, свързани с избраните от теб теми в училище, в университет или в извънкласни форми?/ Do you want to have special training related to your chosen topics at school, university, or extracurricular activities?

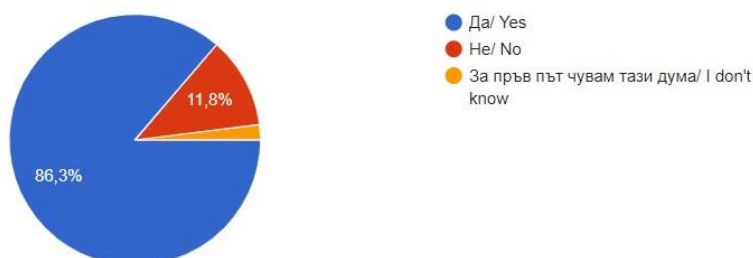
51 отговора



Unfortunately, not a small part, indicated that they do not know what "populism" means (11.8%), and 2% have never heard this word. Still, the percentage of those who noted that they are familiar with the meaning of the concept is relatively high - as many as 86.3%.

14. Знаеш ли какво означава „популизъм“?/ Do you know what "populism" means?

51 отговора

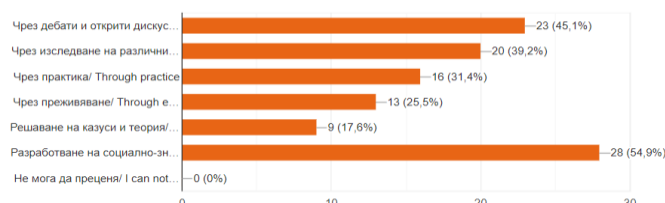


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The survey indicates that, according to the young people surveyed, the biggest factor for achieving higher civic activity is the development of socially significant projects (54.9%) and the holding/participation in debates and open discussions on various topics (45.1%). In addition to these approaches, the reached youth believe that through "Through the study of various social processes" (39.2%) and "Through practice" (31.4%), it would also contribute to higher civic engagement.

15. Как според теб се постига по-висока гражданска активност (посочи до 3 отговора)/
How do you think active citizenship should be taught? (indicate up to 3 answers):

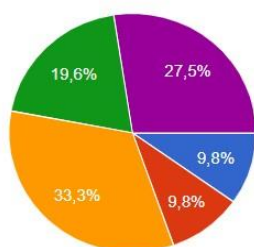
51 отговора



According to 33.3% of the participants, the development of the modern democratic society depends on a higher awareness of what is happening in the country and Europe. Others (27.5%) consider it necessary to create more youth organizations, 19.6% indicate new, creative forms of civic participation - promotion of causes, campaigns, etc. (using social media, platforms, infographics, etc.). Last but not least, with an equal percentage (9.8%), are the organization of trainings (using the methods of non-formal education) regarding ways to participate in decision-making processes and dialogue between young citizens and representatives of the local/state authority/.

16. Развитието на съвременното демократично общество според теб, в най-голяма степен, зависи от: / In your opinion, the development of modern democratic society depends to the greatest extent on:

51 отговора



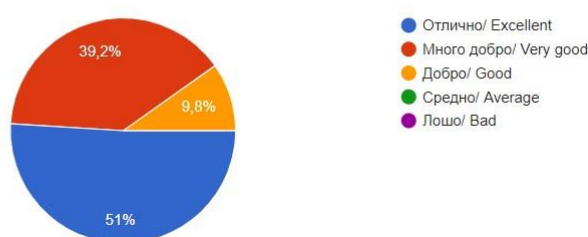
- Диалог между младите граждани и представители на местната/държавна администрация
- Обучения (по методите на неформалното образование) относно гражданско участие
- Чрез по-висока информираност за това, което се случва в страната и Европа
- Нови, креативни форми на гражданско участие – популяризиране на кампании, инициативи, кампании
- Създаването на повече младежки организации/ The creation of more youth organizations

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Regarding the education they receive from school, the respondents are almost split in half in their opinion. 51% think it is quite sufficient and have rated it "Excellent", but the rest are of the opinion that there is a need for improvement in this regard.

17. Как бихте оценили образованието, което получавате в училище?/ How would you evaluate the education you receive at school?

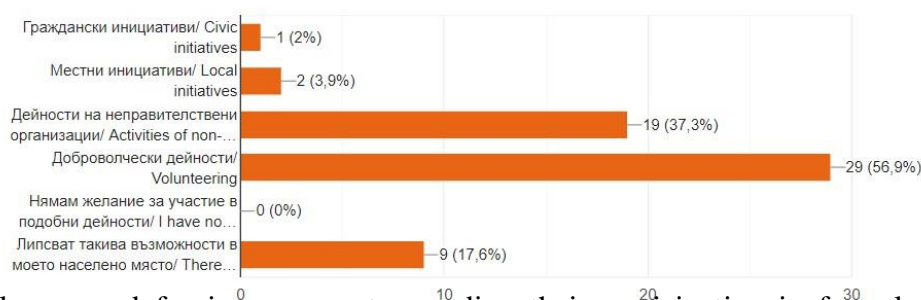
51 отговора



It is worrying that 17.6% indicated a lack of opportunities in their place of residence, only 2% of the surveyed youth participated in civic initiatives, and 3.9% in local ones. They were most active in volunteer activities (56.9%) and activities of non-governmental organizations (37.3%). None indicated that they did not want to participate in this type of activity.

18. Участвал/а ли си някога в (посочи до 3 отговора):/ Have you ever participated in (indicate up to 3 answers):

51 отговора



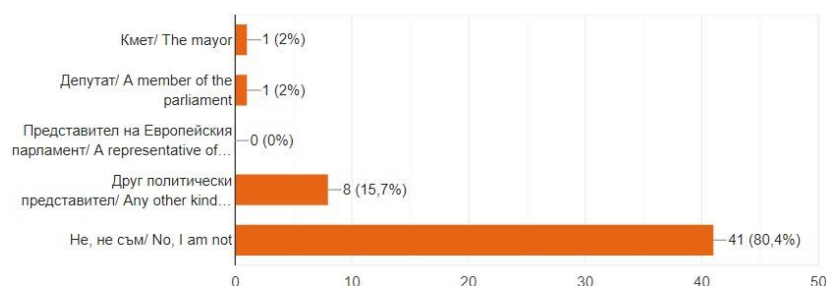
There is also a need for improvement regarding their participation in formal or informal meetings. None of the persons surveyed participated in a meeting with a representative of the European Parliament, and the percentage of participation in meetings with a mayor or deputy is also extremely low - only 2%.



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19. Участвал/а ли си в официални или неформални срещи с: (допуска се повече от един отговор)/ Have you participated in formal or informal meetings with (more than one answer is allowed):

51 отговора



Among the topics most chosen by the surveyed participants in terms of their contribution and active youth participation are:

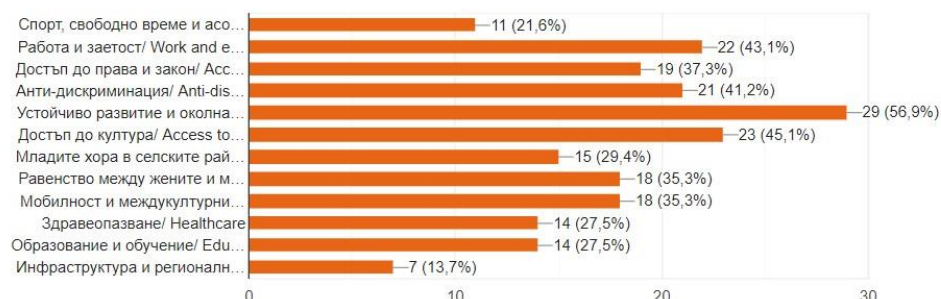
- Sustainable development and environment (56.9%);
- Access to culture (45.1%);
- Work and employment (43.1%);
- Anti-discrimination (41.2%);
- Access to rights and the law (37.3%);

The least reported topic among the young people reached is related to infrastructure and regional development - only 13.7% of the persons.

20. В кои от изброените теми виждаш своя принос и активно младежко участие:

(посочи до 5 отговора)/ In which of the following do you see your contribution and active youth participation (indicate up to 5 answers):

51 отговора



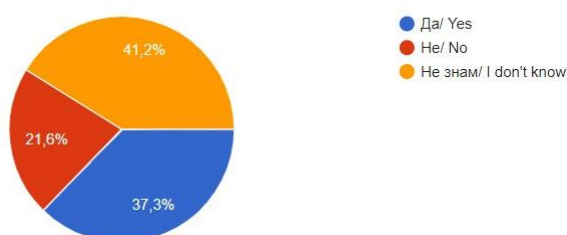


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Not a small part of the respondents think that there is no highly developed civil society in our country, and most of them cannot define. Civil society in Bulgaria is highly developed for only 37.3%.

21. Мислиш ли, че в твоята страна има силно развито гражданско общество?/ Do you think that there is a strong civil society in your country:

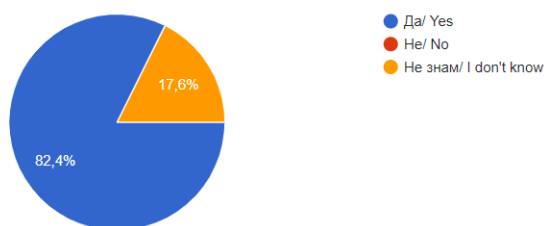
51 отговора



According to the survey, the young people reached have a sense of European identity - 82.4%. But still there are those who indicated that they could not determine - 17.6%. On the positive side, none of the respondents indicated that they certainly did not feel like a European citizen.

22. Чувстваш ли се европейски гражданин?/ Do you feel that you are a European citizen?

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Conclusion

The study highlighted the need to create more opportunities and prospects for citizenship, civic education, and youth participation. One of the main needs of young people in the covered area is related to the provision of more awareness and opportunities for discussion and independent reflection on the topics concerned. The majority of young people have the desire and motivation, but there is ambiguity, uncertainty, and confusion, which is why there is a significant percentage of inactivity or passivity among them. In this regard, it is necessary for them to have access to more information on the topics of active citizenship that is presented in a language they understand, with a practical focus and more examples. The high interest demonstrated by young people in the topics included in the survey is complemented by their expressed desire to advocate for similar topics in schools, universities, and/or extracurricular activities. These positive attitudes among young people toward information and education in the field of active citizenship and youth participation should be used by the NGO sector and various youth workers with a view to effectively activating the young generation in the area and promoting the building of the necessary capacity for this. And here comes the role of non-formal education as a key tool for sustainable acquisition, confirmation, and upgrading of key competences among young people in this direction. This is precisely what is highlighted as an important priority in the National Youth Strategy (2021–2030): Goal No. 1. In this context, the actions of the civil and NGO sectors are of particular importance. In practice, they turn out to be the only active source of practical support for young people to get involved in and engage in real civic activities. Therefore, it is important to note the relative progress achieved in some aspects of active youth participation and active citizenship, precisely through the long-term efforts of organizations working with and for young people. As can be seen from the results of the survey, the highest share of youth activity is in relation to the social and cultural dimension. In recent years, the share of young people participating in voluntary activities has also increased. That is why young people are more confident and have more capacity when it comes to active civic participation from a socio-cultural aspect.

This is not the case, however, with regard to the economic and political dimensions of youth participation. The most serious deficit (both in terms of interest, motivation, and capacity to participate) among young people is reported in the sphere of political participation. The level of interaction between the youth and other participants in the decision-making process remains extremely low. There is a lack of sustainable support in the direction of improving their participation in political activities and meetings at the local, national, and European

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levels. In most cases, young people do not even clearly know the principles, structure, and functions of institutions, which are of primary importance for the education of full-fledged and active citizens. In this regard, the results of the study report a clear need to improve the awareness of young people regarding political participation and its benefits, a need to stimulate their commitment, and a need to provide more and more accessible opportunities for quality participation and empowerment of young people at all levels of decision-making, local, national, and European, as set out in goal #3 of the National Youth Strategy 2021–2030. And again, the participation of non-governmental organizations in cooperation with young people comes to the fore as mediators to help facilitate active communication between themselves and those in power, which is of crucial importance both for the active participation of young people in the democratic life of their communities and for achieving a transparent and responsible local government working in the interest of the community. In this regard, NGOs should also direct their efforts and investments in the direction of promoting the membership of more young people in various youth organizations and their inclusion in campaigns, initiatives, and advisory bodies to local, regional, and national governing bodies in order to actively participate in democratic life and full inclusion in the decision-making process on problems and issues important for their future.

In summary, we can conclude that a more active interaction between NGOs and young people is needed, including a wider use of the tools of non-formal education, with a view to promoting the awareness and capacity of the youth in the sector of active citizenship and active youth participation in their various directions. In this way, young people will get real support to express and defend their opinions on public issues not only online but also to take real and effective actions, chase results, etc. Thus, in practice, it stimulates their motivation, readiness, and active participation in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the country and ensures adequate participation of young people at all levels of decision-making, local, national, and European. All these improvements would help to realize the overall vision laid down in the National Youth Strategy (2021-2030), namely "capable, engaged, and empowered young people, ready to develop their full potential and consciously contribute to the development of the Republic of Bulgaria in the context of the European family and the global world".