
GIRLS IN DEMOCRACY

**Educational programme
for young women**



About the Girls in Democracy Project

Girls in Democracy is a two-year European project (2026–2027) created to strengthen the participation, confidence and agency of girls and young women aged 16–25. The project brings together organisations and young women from Lithuania, Croatia, Poland and Portugal, creating opportunities to learn, connect, exchange experiences and take an active role in their communities.

Girls and young women have ideas, experiences and perspectives that matter, yet they do not always have equal opportunities, confidence or support to make their voices heard and participate in decisions that affect their lives. Girls in Democracy responds to these challenges by creating spaces where young women can develop their civic, leadership and advocacy skills, explore issues that matter to them and turn their ideas into action.

The project began by listening to young women themselves. Focus groups conducted in all four partner countries explored their experiences of participation, what motivates them to become involved and what makes participation more difficult. Their perspectives and needs helped shape the educational programme presented in this curriculum.

Throughout the project, young women take part in training activities, develop and implement local initiatives, engage in dialogue with decision-makers and connect with peers from other European countries. An international forum in Portugal provides an additional opportunity to exchange experiences, learn from one another and strengthen cooperation across borders.



Through these activities, Girls in Democracy aims not only to develop individual skills, but also to strengthen young women's confidence in their own voice and their ability to contribute to change. By connecting personal empowerment with civic participation and collective action, the project encourages young women to recognise that democracy is not something that happens only in institutions - it is also shaped through everyday participation, dialogue and action in our schools, organisations and communities.

Girls in Democracy is coordinated by Mano Europe (Lithuania) in partnership with DKolektiv (Croatia), CZ-ART (Poland) and Inspiring Girls (Portugal).

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INTRODUCTION

Young women's participation does not begin only in formal politics or public life. It develops through everyday experiences - being listened to, having space to express an opinion, seeing different role models, trying out ideas and discovering that one's perspective can matter. These experiences differ across families, schools, communities and countries, but they all shape how young women see their own place and possibilities in society.

This curriculum starts from these everyday realities and from the voices of young women themselves.

Why this curriculum?

These everyday experiences do not happen in isolation. They are shaped by the opportunities, expectations and inequalities that girls and young women encounter in the societies and communities around them.

Much has changed for girls and women over recent decades, and today they have access to opportunities that were not equally available to previous generations. Yet formal rights and opportunities do not automatically result in equal participation, influence or representation. Women make up roughly half of the EU population, yet only 34.2% of members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments across the EU are women (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2026).

Statistics, however, tell only part of the story.

Growing up also means gradually finding one's place in the world - learning when to speak, when to listen, whom to trust, how to make choices and how to respond when something does not feel fair. For girls and young women, these experiences are also shaped by expectations related to gender, confidence, leadership and participation.

Some of these influences are visible, while others are subtle: whose opinion is taken seriously, who is encouraged to take initiative, who is expected to lead, what kinds of leadership are recognised, and whether there are accessible opportunities to participate and contribute.

For this reason, the curriculum does not approach participation simply as a question of individual confidence or motivation. It recognises that young women's participation is shaped by an interaction between personal capacities, relationships, opportunities and the wider social environment.

Grounded in young women's experiences

Understanding these everyday experiences was an important starting point for the development of the curriculum. Rather than beginning only from assumptions about what girls and young women need to learn, the partner organisations first listened to them.

The curriculum is based on a needs assessment involving more than 100 girls and young women from Croatia, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal, who took part in focus groups organised in the four project countries. The conversations explored how young women currently participate in school, community and public life; what encourages them to become involved; what makes participation more difficult; and what knowledge, skills and support they feel would help them participate more actively.

Although their experiences differed, a number of common themes emerged. Young women spoke about wanting to express their views, contribute to change, take responsibility and feel that their voices matter. At the same time, they described barriers at different levels. Some related to confidence, fear of judgement or uncertainty about how and where to become

involved. Others were connected to the environment around them — including lack of information and visible opportunities, limited youth spaces, time, transport or financial constraints, and the feeling that young people are not always listened to or taken seriously.

The focus groups were not intended to provide a representative picture of all girls and young women in the four countries. Instead, they offered direct insight into the experiences, questions and learning needs of the young women for whom this curriculum was being developed.

From needs to learning

The curriculum was developed collaboratively by partner organisations from Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Croatia, bringing together different experiences of working with young people, gender equality, participation and non-formal education. The identified needs were translated into four interconnected areas of learning: gender equality, civic participation, leadership and strategic thinking, and advocacy.

The modules are designed to build on one another. Participants first explore how gender norms, rights and inequalities influence everyday life and participation. They then examine different ways of participating in democratic and community life and consider where and how their voices can be heard. Leadership and strategic thinking encourage them to recognise their own strengths and ways of influencing others, to examine challenges from different perspectives, and to think about the change they would like to see. Finally, advocacy provides tools for turning issues they care about into clearer messages, ideas and possible actions.

Across all four modules, the curriculum aims to strengthen more than knowledge alone. It creates space for reflection, dialogue, experimentation, cooperation and learning from one another. Participants are not expected to arrive with previous experience of activism, leadership or civic participation. The starting point is what they already know, notice, question and experience in their own lives.

One curriculum, different contexts

Developing one curriculum for four countries also required recognising that young women's experiences are not identical. Croatia, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal differ in their social, cultural and institutional contexts, and differences also exist within each country, between urban and rural communities, age groups, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, and previous experiences of participation.

The curriculum therefore provides a shared learning framework rather than a one-size-fits-all programme. Its main objectives, concepts and methodological principles are common across the four countries, while trainers are encouraged to adapt examples, language, case studies and discussions to the realities of their participants. This means avoiding assumptions that all girls and young women experience gender, participation or leadership in the same way and creating space for different perspectives.

At its core, the curriculum approaches girls and young women not only through the barriers they may encounter, but through their experiences, strengths, knowledge, relationships and capacity to contribute. Its aim is not to create one particular type of participant, activist or leader, but to offer young women opportunities to better understand the society around them, recognise their own voice and capacities, learn from others, explore different ways of participating and leading, and become more able to act individually and together with others on the issues that matter to them.

MODULE 1

Gender Equality and Women's Rights

Duration of the whole module (minutes): 240 minutes (4 hours)

1. Key Concepts and Topics

Gender equality means that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices regardless of the roles assigned to men and women, and that everyone's rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female. This module introduces gender equality as both a human rights principle and an everyday, lived experience, and positions feminism as the movement that seeks to achieve it.

The module distinguishes between sex (biological characteristics) and gender (social representations and expectations about sex), and explores how gender stereotypes and social roles are constructed - not biological - through examples such as the historical origin of "pink for girls, blue for boys." It also traces the four waves of feminism (right to vote, "everything is political," plurality/intersectionality, digital activism), showing that women's achievements did not happen all at once.

Participants examine how gender influences real life: feminisation rates by field of study, STEM and ICT graduates, leadership positions, representation in national parliaments, and the gender pay gap across the EU. The module introduces the concept of the "Pink Tax," national and international reference instruments for gender equality (CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the Sustainable Development Goals), and the idea of gender and climate justice.

A dedicated section addresses gender in the digital era: online hate speech and intersectionality, the "manosphere," "tradwives" and "pick me girls," AI-generated bias and deepfakes, online gaming/gambling, positive role models, and digital safety (warning signs and how to prevent and react to online risks).

Finally, the module moves from awareness to action: the spheres and domains where gender equality is promoted (personal, family, institutional, public), and feminist micro-activisms - concrete, everyday actions (active voice, inclusive language, sisterhood, education, conscious consumption, male allies, boycotting hate) that participants can start applying immediately.

2. Specific objectives (2-3)

1. To promote participants' understanding of gender equality and human rights, and of how gender inequalities show up in everyday life, the labour market, leadership, politics and digital spaces.
2. To foster critical thinking about gender stereotypes, discrimination and gender-based violence - including online - by distinguishing biological facts from social constructs.
3. To encourage active citizenship, moving from awareness to action, by helping participants identify concrete micro-activisms they can apply in their own daily life.

3. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE

- * Define key concepts such as sex, gender, gender equality, gender stereotypes, social roles and intersectionality.
- * Identify the four historical waves of feminism and what each one focused on.
- * Recognise the main gender gaps in education, STEM/ICT fields, leadership, politics and pay across the EU.
- * Describe how gender inequality manifests in digital spaces (online hate speech, the manosphere, deepfakes, grooming).
- * Identify national and international instruments that protect gender equality (CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the Sustainable Development Goals).

SKILLS

- * Distinguish between biological characteristics and socially constructed gender expectations and stereotypes.
- * Critically analyse everyday products, media and online content for gender bias (e.g. the Pink Tax).
- * Recognise warning signs of online gender-based violence and apply basic digital safety practices.

- * Identify and describe concrete micro-activism actions applicable to their own daily life.
- * Express their own perspective on gender equality issues respectfully, in a group setting.

ATTITUDES

- * Value equality and reject stereotypes and discrimination based on gender.
- * Feel empowered to take small, everyday actions towards gender equality.
- * Show empathy and solidarity towards other girls and women (sisterhood).
- * Value the role of male allies and inclusive collaboration in achieving gender equality.
- * Feel motivated to continue engaging with the topic across the following modules.

4. Link to other modules:

This module is closely connected to the other modules of the programme, as it provides the foundational knowledge and critical perspective needed to understand inequalities, power dynamics, participation and social change.

- It connects with **Leadership & Strategic Thinking** by encouraging participants to reflect on inclusive leadership, representation, decision-making, and the impact of gender norms on confidence, ambition and leadership opportunities.
- It complements **Civic Participation & Political Literacy** by exploring how gender inequalities influence political participation, representation, citizenship, democratic engagement and access to decision-making spaces.
- It creates a direct bridge to **Advocacy & Action Development**, as participants are encouraged to identify social issues, critically analyse inequalities, and reflect on how they can contribute to safer, fairer and more inclusive communities through civic action and advocacy initiatives.

5. Module activities overview:

ACTIVITY	DURATION	METHOD
Icebreaker – Put a Finger Down	5 minutes	Movement-based icebreaker; participants step forward (or put a finger down) for statements that apply to their own experience, revealing shared experiences of gender inequality.
Activity 1 – Let’s Zine, Part I	30 minutes	Individual creative activity; participants design the cover of their own “Girls in Democracy” zine/manifesto using magazines, collage and drawing.
Activity 2 – The Labels Box	20 minutes	Small-group activity; groups sort everyday phrases/situations into “biological” vs. “social expectation.”
Activity 3 – The Gender Wallet	12 minutes	Small-group activity; groups guess and then compare real price differences between “male” and “female” versions of everyday products (Pink Tax).
Activity 4 – Who Inspires You Online?	8 minutes	Individual reflection followed by plenary sharing on positive online role models.
Activity 5 – Feminist Micro-Activisms	20 minutes	Small-group activity; each group is assigned a micro-activism category and identifies concrete examples they can apply this month.
Activity 6 – Let’s Zine, Part II	15 minutes	Individual creative activity; participants add new pages to their zine based on what they learned in the module (e.g. a stereotype they want to challenge, their chosen micro-activism commitment).
Closing Reflection	10 minutes	Plenary discussion around the timeline of women’s achievements, followed by a homework prompt.
TOTAL	120 minutes (2 hours)	The remaining time within the 4-hour module (approx. 2h) is used for theoretical input, group discussion and transitions between activities.

ICEBREAKER – Put a Finger Down

Duration: 5 minutes

Objective: To create a safe, physical way for participants to recognise that gender-based experiences are shared, not individual, before the theoretical content begins.

Materials:

None required (participants use their own hand/fingers, or take a step forward instead if preferred).

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator explains the rules: everyone starts with five fingers up (or standing still). For each statement read aloud, if it applies to the participant's own experience, they put one finger down (or take a step forward).
2. Before starting, the facilitator states clearly: "Your comfort comes first. If any statement makes you uncomfortable, you don't have to participate — you can simply stay still."
3. The facilitator reads each statement aloud, pausing briefly between each one:
 - If you've ever been told that certain activities, toys, courses or careers are more suited for girls and others for boys.
 - If you've ever deleted or avoided posting your opinion on social media to avoid being attacked, insulted or exposed.
 - If you've ever been told you "should smile more" or act more "nice."
 - If you've ever been made to feel "bossy" or "aggressive" for expressing your opinion assertively.
 - If you've ever heard a comment that puts girls down and sends them back to the kitchen — e.g. "go make a sandwich" — or felt pressured to learn to clean or cook specifically because you're a girl.
 - If you've ever received unsolicited messages, images or comments of a sexual nature.
If you've ever received an unsolicited comment about your body, your appearance or your weight that made you feel uncomfortable.
 - If you've noticed that in group work, girls are expected to organise, take notes or do the presentation.
 - If you've ever felt scared or had to pretend you were on the phone while walking home or to school alone.
 - If you've ever felt or noticed that in politics, women's opinions are often dismissed or ignored.
4. At the end, the facilitator invites a brief, voluntary reflection: "How many fingers do you still have up? What did you notice?"

Facilitator note

This activity is meant to be felt, not discussed in depth — avoid turning it into a debate at this stage. It sets an emotional entry point into the module; the theoretical content that follows will unpack these experiences.

Reassure participants that not participating in any individual statement is completely acceptable.

ACTIVITY 1 – Let's Zine, Part I: I Write My Own Story

Duration: 30 minutes

Objective: To introduce participants to the “Girls in Democracy” zine they will build throughout the programme, starting with a personalised cover that reflects their own identity.

Materials:

- Magazines (for cutting out letters, images and words)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Coloured paper/cardboard for the cover
- Markers
- A blank zine booklet (or folded paper) for each participant

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator explains that each module of the programme will add a new page to participants' own “Girls in Democracy” manifesto (zine), starting today with the cover.
2. Participants are asked: “What will you call your Girls in Democracy manifesto?”
3. Using the magazines provided, participants cut out big letters, images or words to create a collage-style cover, or draw/write directly — anything that represents “this is me.”
4. Participants have 10 minutes to complete their cover.

Facilitator note:

There are no right or wrong answers here — the goal is self-expression, not artistic quality. Circulate and encourage participants who seem unsure where to start.

Invite 2–3 volunteers to briefly share their cover title/design with the group at the end, if they feel comfortable.

Annexes (if any)

- Zine booklet template: <https://canva.link/9cmei19dwndn7mt>

ACTIVITY 2 – The Labels Box

Duration: 20 minutes

Objective: To help participants distinguish between biological characteristics and socially constructed gender expectations, using everyday statements and situations.

Materials:

- Post-its/cards, each pre-written with an everyday phrase or situation (e.g. “boys don’t cry,” “girls are better at languages,” “men are taller than women”) - one full set per small group
- Marker to create labelled areas: “Biological” and “Social Expectation”
- Tape/bostik

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator divides participants into small groups (3–4 people) and gives each group its own set of label cards.
2. Each group takes turns pulling a label and discussing it, using two guiding questions: “Is this true for every human being in the world (biological)? Or is it something society taught us to expect (social expectation)?”
3. The group decides together and sticks the label on the matching side of their board.
4. After going through their labels (approx. 10 minutes), each group shares with the rest of the room one or two examples they found most surprising or debated the most.

Facilitator note

Some labels are intentionally ambiguous or contested — this is by design, to spark discussion rather than have one obvious “correct” answer. Let groups disagree and explore why.

Annexes (if any)

- Set of pre-written label cards: <https://canva.link/8ts5ozj3z0s7aoq>

ACTIVITY 3 – The Gender Wallet

Duration: 12 minutes

Objective: To demonstrate, through real products, how gender influences pricing and consumption (the “Pink Tax”), making the concept tangible rather than abstract.

Materials:

- Pairs of “male” and “female” versions of everyday products (e.g. razors, shampoo, deodorant), or images/cards of these products with prices hidden
- Printed real purchase receipts, to be revealed at the end
- Paper for groups to note down their guesses

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator divides participants into small groups (4–5 people) and gives each group a different everyday product (its “male” and “female” version).
2. For 5 minutes, each group discusses and guesses: is there a price gap between the two versions? Which do they think is more expensive, and why?
3. Each group chooses a spokesperson and shares their guess with everyone (1 minute per group).
4. The facilitator reveals the real receipts/prices for each product, comparing them to the groups’ guesses, and introduces the term “Pink Tax.”

Facilitator note:

If real products aren’t available, printed images with prices work just as well. Try to keep at least one visibly identical pair of products (same brand/packaging, different colour marketing) for maximum impact.

Annexes (if any)

- Printed purchase receipts

ACTIVITY 4 – Who Inspires You Online?

Duration: 8 minutes

Objective: To reflect on positive online role models and encourage participants to notice who they choose to follow and why.

Materials:

- None required (optional: participants' phones, if allowed, to show an example)

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator asks participants to think individually for 1–2 minutes: “Who do you follow online that inspires you, makes you laugh, teaches you something, or makes you feel good?” (e.g. scientists, artists, activists, comedians, athletes...)
2. In plenary, the facilitator invites a few volunteers to share: the creator's name, what they do, and why others should follow them.

Facilitator note

Steer the discussion towards what these role models have in common (authenticity, expertise, positive values) rather than towards follower counts or fame.

Annexes

- None

ACTIVITY 5 – Feminist Micro-Activisms

Duration: 20 minutes

Objective: To move from theory to practice: participants identify concrete ways to apply feminist micro-activisms in their daily lives (school, family, friends, social media).

Materials:

- 7 cards, one per micro-activism category (Taking Up Space/Active Voice, Inclusive Language, Sisterhood, Education, Conscious Consumption, Male Allies, Boycott Hate), each with a short definition
- Flipchart sheets or post-its and pens for each group
- Timer

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator divides participants into small groups of 4–5 (adjusting so that, if there are fewer groups than categories, some groups receive two categories).
2. Each group receives a card with one micro-activism category and its definition.
3. For 5 minutes, the group discusses: “What does this actually mean in our real life? What could we do this week — at school, at home, with friends, on social media — that would be a concrete example of this?” They write down 2–3 concrete examples.
4. Each group chooses a spokesperson.
5. In plenary, each group presents its category and the examples they found (1–2 minutes per group).

Facilitator note:

Close with a brief synthesis connecting all the categories shared, reinforcing the core message: small everyday actions, added together, create change. Ask: “Which of these were you already doing without knowing it had a name? Which one do you want to try this month?”

Annexes (if any):

- [7 micro-activism category cards with definitions](#)

ACTIVITY 6 – Let's Zine, Part II

Duration: 15 minutes

Objective: To consolidate learning from the module by having participants add new, personal pages to their zine, connecting the module's content to their own experience and commitments.

Materials:

- Zine booklets from Activity 1
- Magazines, scissors, glue, markers, coloured paper

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator invites participants to take out the zine they started in Activity 1.
2. Participants add one or more new pages reflecting on the module, for example: a stereotype they want to challenge, a label from the Labels Box that surprised them, or the micro-activism they commit to trying this month.
3. Participants have 10–12 minutes to work on their pages.

Facilitator note

This activity works as a personal, creative way of reinforcing the module's key takeaways - encourage participants to be honest and personal rather than "getting it right."

Annexes (if any)

- None (continuation of Activity 1 materials)

CLOSING REFLECTION – Timeline of Women's Achievements

Duration: 10 minutes

Objective: To close the module by situating participants' own experience within a broader historical journey of women's achievements, and to look ahead.

Materials:

- Timeline of women's achievements (visual/printed)

Step-by-step

1. The facilitator presents the timeline of women's achievements.
2. In plenary, the facilitator asks the homework question: "If this timeline continued until 2050... what event would you like to see added?"
3. Participants share their answers as a closing round, or note them down individually as homework to bring to the next session.

Facilitator note

Keep this light and forward-looking — it should leave participants with a sense of possibility and agency, not just historical facts.

Annexes (if any)

- Timeline of women's achievements (visual)

HELPLINES (backup reference — not part of the taught content)

Kept at the very end of the module as a facilitator reference, available if a participant discloses a personal situation or asks a direct question. Includes contact details for security forces (PSP/GNR), the European emergency number (112), and other relevant support lines.

Materials and resources

Training Materials

- *Presentation slides*
- *Reflection worksheets and group discussion materials*
- *Zine booklets and craft materials*
- *Timeline of women's achievements*

Materials for Activities

- *Flipcharts and paper*
- *Post-its*
- *Markers and pens*
- *Magazines, scissors, glue*
- *Sample products / product cards and receipts (Gender Wallet)*

Equipment Needed

- *Laptop*
- *Projector and screen*
- *Internet connection*

Literature / References

- *Eurostat, Gender pay gap statistics and Tertiary education statistics, 2024*
- *European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Gender Equality Index and Gender balance in business and finance, 2025*
- *UN Women, Gender Snapshot, 2024*
- *CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

MODULE 2 - Civic Participation & Political Literacy

Duration of the whole module (minutes): 270 min (4,5 hours)

1. Key Concepts and Topics

This module introduces participants to the foundations of political literacy and civic participation, helping them understand how democracy functions in practice and how citizens can actively influence public life. It combines knowledge about democratic values, institutions and decision-making processes with practical skills such as critical evaluation of information, democratic dialogue, and identifying opportunities for civic engagement.

The module encourages participants to see themselves not only as future voters, but as active members of their communities whose voices, ideas and actions can contribute to democratic life. Special attention is given to women's participation in democracy and to the barriers and opportunities affecting young women's civic and political engagement.

CORE CONCEPTS AND THEMATIC AREAS

Political literacy – understanding how democratic systems and institutions function, how public decisions are made, and developing the knowledge, critical thinking and confidence needed to participate in democratic life and make informed civic and political decisions.

Civic participation – recognising the many ways citizens can contribute to public life beyond voting, influence decision-making, respond to community needs, and strengthen democracy through democratic, peaceful and lawful action.

Democracy – its core values, principles, human rights and the rule of law.

Democratic institutions and levels of governance – understanding decision-making at the local, regional, national and European levels.

Media and information literacy – recognising misinformation and disinformation, evaluating information critically, and applying basic fact-checking strategies.

Women's representation and participation in democratic life – exploring barriers, opportunities and the importance of equal participation in democratic decision-making.

Active citizenship, democratic engagement and individual responsibility – recognising personal agency and opportunities to contribute to democratic life within schools, communities and wider society.

The module follows a logical learning pathway, moving from understanding democracy as a system of shared values and institutions to recognising participants' own role as informed, active and responsible citizens.

LEARNING PATHWAY

Why democracy matters → How democracy works → How citizens influence democracy → Why informed participation matters → Why women's participation matters

WHY DEMOCRACY MATTERS: What are the values and principles that make democracy possible?

Focus: Understanding democracy as a system built on shared values, human rights, participation, equality and the rule of law.

HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS: Who makes decisions and at what level?

Focus: Understanding democratic institutions, levels of governance (local, regional, national and European Union) and how public decisions affect everyday life.

HOW CITIZENS INFLUENCE DEMOCRACY: What role do citizens play in democratic societies?

Focus: Exploring civic participation beyond voting, recognising different ways people can influence their communities and democratic decision-making.

WHY INFORMED PARTICIPATION MATTERS: How do we make informed democratic decisions?

Focus: Developing political and media literacy by recognising misinformation, evaluating sources critically and applying basic fact-checking strategies.

WHY WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION MATTERS: Why does democracy need everyone's voice?

Focus: Reflecting on women's representation and participation in democratic life, recognising barriers to participation and the importance of equal opportunities in decision-making.

2. Specific objectives (2-3)

2

To strengthen participants' understanding of democracy, democratic institutions and civic participation, enabling them to recognise how decisions are made and how citizens can influence public life at different levels.

To develop participants' political and media literacy by strengthening their ability to critically evaluate information, distinguish facts from misinformation, and make informed democratic decisions.

To encourage participants to recognise their own role in democracy, increasing their confidence to participate in civic and political life while reflecting on the importance of women's equal representation and participation.

3. Learning Outcomes

KNOWLEDGE

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- * explain the core values and principles of democracy;
- * describe how democratic institutions operate at local, regional, national and European levels;
- * identify different forms of civic participation beyond voting;
- * explain the basic principles of political literacy and democratic decision-making;
- * recognise common forms of misinformation and disinformation and understand their impact on democracy;
- * describe factors influencing women's participation and representation in democratic life.

SKILLS

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- * analyse democratic issues from multiple perspectives before forming opinions;
- * identify the appropriate institutions and levels of governance responsible for different public issues;
- * critically evaluate information sources and apply basic fact-checking strategies;
- * distinguish reliable information from misinformation and manipulative content;

- * recognise opportunities for civic participation within their school, community and wider society;
- * participate constructively in discussions, expressing their views respectfully while listening to others;
- * make informed decisions based on evidence, democratic values and critical reflection.

ATTITUDES

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- * value democracy, human rights and active citizenship as essential foundations of inclusive societies;
- * appreciate the importance of informed, responsible and respectful participation in democratic life;
- * demonstrate openness towards diverse perspectives while engaging constructively in dialogue;
- * recognise their own potential to contribute to their communities and democratic processes;
- * value equal participation and representation of women in civic and political life;
- * develop greater confidence in expressing their views and participating in public discussions.

4. Link to other modules:

Module 2 builds on Module 1: Gender Equality and Women's Rights, where participants explore gender stereotypes, equality, discrimination and women's rights. It extends these themes by examining how democratic institutions function, why women's representation matters, and how young women can participate in civic and political life.

The module also creates a bridge to Module 3: Leadership and Strategic Thinking by strengthening participants' understanding of democratic participation, encouraging critical reflection, and increasing their confidence to engage in public life. The knowledge gained about political systems and participation provides a meaningful context for exploring leadership, agency and strategic decision-making.

Finally, Module 2 prepares participants for Module 4: Advocacy and Action Development. By understanding democratic institutions, decision-making processes and different channels of civic participation, participants are better equipped to design advocacy initiatives, engage with decision-makers and contribute to democratic change within their communities.

5. Module activities overview:

ACTIVITY	DURATION	METHOD
Activity 1 Democracy – Principles and Values	65 minutes	Brainstorming, collaborative definition-building, case study analysis, small-group work, carousel method, simulation/game-based learning, guided reflection, plenary discussion.
Activity 2 Democracy in Action – Levels of Governance	45 minutes	Movement-based activity, brainstorming, small-group work, card sorting (matching activity), case study analysis, carousel discussion, critical reflection, plenary discussion.
Activity 3 Civic Participation and the Role of Citizens	40 minutes	Brainstorming, facilitated discussion, gallery walk, movement-based learning, interactive voting using stickers, individual reflection.
Activity 4 Fact- Check Challenge – Navigating Information in Democracy	60 minutes	Media analysis, small-group work, fact-checking exercise, guided discussion, reflection.
Activity 5 Women in democracy – Representation and Participation	60 minutes	Movement-based activity, individual reflection, facilitated discussion, quiz, small-group work, collaborative analysis, group presentations, plenary debrief, personal action reflection.
TOTAL	270 minutes (4,5 hours)	

Facilitator's Note

Throughout this module, participants work in small groups during several activities. Facilitators may decide whether to create new groups for each activity or keep the same groups throughout the module, depending on the group's characteristics, the available time, and their preferred facilitation style.

Keeping participants in the same groups can help maintain the flow of the session, reduce transition time, and make it easier to complete all activities within the allocated timeframe. It may also support the development of trust and collaboration within each group.

On the other hand, changing groups between activities gives participants the opportunity to interact with more people, exchange a wider range of perspectives and experiences, and build stronger connections across the whole group. This can enrich discussions and contribute to a more dynamic learning experience.

There is no single correct approach. Facilitators are encouraged to choose the option that best suits the needs of their group and the practical circumstances of the training.

Slides have been prepared to support the delivery of Module 2. You can view the presentation on Canva and Heyzine.

- <https://canva.link/> or

- <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/>

ACTIVITY 1 – Democracy – Principles and Values

Duration: 65 minutes

Objective: To increase participants' understanding of democracy by exploring its definition, core values, and fundamental principles, while encouraging critical thinking, collaboration, and reflection on their importance in everyday life and active citizenship.

By the end of the workshop participants will:

- * define democracy in their own words and compare it with an established definition
- * distinguish between democratic values and democratic principles
- * identify the core values and principles that underpin democratic societies
- * explain why democratic values and principles are essential for building inclusive, fair, and participatory societies
- * reflect on their own priorities and attitudes towards democracy.

Materials:

- * Annex 1.1 – Core Values of Democracy (one copy for each participant or small group)
- * Annex 1.2 – Principles of Democracy one copy for each participant or small group)
- * Annex 1.3 - Case studies for Democracy Detectives
- * Annex 1.4 - Cards for the Democratic Values Auction
- * flipchart paper
- * markers, pens
- * adhesive tape
- * paper
- * sticky notes (optional)

Step-by-step

0. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the module, outlines its structure and learning journey (using the dedicated slides available on <https://canva.link/> or <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/>). If there are any new participants, the facilitator briefly revisits the group rules to ensure that everyone shares the same expectations for respectful and active participation.

"Today we are beginning a learning journey through democracy, civic participation and political literacy.

We will start by exploring why democracy matters and the values and principles on which it is built. Then we will look at how democracy works in practice, how decisions are made at different levels, and how citizens can influence those decisions. We will also explore why informed participation is essential in a world full of information, misinformation and disinformation, and why democracy becomes stronger when everyone's voice – including the voices of young women – is heard and included in decision-making.

Throughout this module, we will focus on two key concepts reflected in its title: political literacy and civic participation. These concepts will guide our learning and help us better understand not only how democracy works, but also how each of us can play an active role in strengthening it.

Before we begin, let's briefly look at what these two concepts mean.

Political literacy is about understanding how democratic systems and institutions function, knowing how public decisions are made, thinking critically about political and social issues, and having the confidence to participate in democratic life and make informed civic and political decisions.

Civic participation refers to the active involvement of people in the life of their communities and society. It includes the many ways citizens can contribute to public life, influence decisions, respond to community needs, and strengthen democracy through peaceful, democratic and lawful action.

By the end of this module, I hope you will not only have a better understanding of how democracy works, but also recognise that each of us has the ability—and the responsibility—to contribute to making it stronger."

1. What is Democracy? (10 minutes)

Objective: co-create a shared definition of democracy; understand the difference between democratic values and principles; become familiar with the core values and



principles that underpin democratic societies. The aim of the activity is to introduce or reinforce key concepts rather than to assess participants' prior knowledge.

Instructions:

Begin the activity by asking participants the following question:

“If someone asked you, 'What is democracy?', what would you say in one sentence?”

Invite participants to share their ideas. Write key words and phrases on the flipchart, encouraging everyone to contribute. Once several responses have been collected, facilitate a brief discussion and work together to create a shared definition of democracy.

After participants have formulated their own definition, present the following one:

Democracy is a system of government in which power belongs to the people and is exercised directly or through freely elected representatives. It is based on shared values and democratic principles that protect human rights, freedom, equality, participation, and the rule of law.

Source of definition: Adapted from the Council of Europe. Promoting Democracy and Good Governance in Europe. Available at: [Promoting Democracy and Good Governance in Europe - Portal](#)

Explain that democracy is built on two complementary elements: Values and Principles.

Democratic values are the beliefs and ideals that democracy seeks to protect, such as human dignity, freedom, equality, justice, respect, tolerance, inclusion, solidarity, participation, and human rights.

Democratic principles are the rules and mechanisms that enable these values to be realised in practice, such as the rule of law, free and fair elections, accountability, transparency, separation of powers, and political participation.

Distribute *Annex 1.1 – Core Values of Democracy* and *Annex 1.2 – Principles of Democracy* (print them on both sides of paper, one for each participant or each small group). Briefly review the handouts and encourage participants to refer to them throughout the workshop.

2. Democracy Detectives (25 MINUTES)

Objective: To help participants identify democratic values and principles through real-life situations.

Instructions:

Divide participants into four small groups. Provide each group with one case study (Annex 1.3) and a flipchart sheet.

Each group discusses the following questions:

- * What is happening in this situation?
- * What is unfair or problematic?
- * Which democratic value or principle is missing or violated?
- * How could the situation be improved?

Participants write their answers on the flipchart sheet. After 5 minutes, groups rotate to the next case study and continue building on the previous group's ideas.

Continue until all groups have visited all case studies.

- * **Case Study A: Freedom of Expression**
A student publishes an article expressing criticism of school policies. The article is removed without explanation, and the student is warned not to share similar opinions again.
- * **Case Study B: Equality**
A youth project accepts applications only from participants from selected schools, excluding many young people from the community.
- * **Case Study C: Respect and Inclusion**
During a group discussion, some participants continuously interrupt others and dismiss their opinions without listening.
- * **Case Study D: Rule of Law and Fairness**
The organizers of a competition change the selection criteria after all applications have already been submitted.

Group Debriefing

Bring everyone together and discuss:

- * Which democratic values and principles appeared most frequently?
- * Which situations seemed most serious?
- * How would these situations affect people involved?

3. Democratic Values Auction (15 minutes)

Objective: To encourage participants to prioritize democratic values and justify their choices.

Instructions:

Participants will be working in small groups (3-4 persons). Each group receives 100 points (or imaginary euros).

Present cards with the following values (Annex 1.4): Freedom, Equality, Human Rights, Justice, Respect, Inclusion, Tolerance, Solidarity.

Explain that groups must "buy" the values they consider most essential for a democratic society.

Conduct the auction by inviting bids for each value.

Once all values have been auctioned, ask each group to explain:

- * Which values they spent the most points on.
- * Why they considered these values most important.
- * Whether democracy could function without them.

Debriefing Questions

- * Was it difficult to choose between values?
- * Can all democratic values be equally important?
- * What happens when one value is ignored?

4. Democracy Survival Kit (10 minutes) - *optional, if time allows*

Objective: To consolidate learning and encourage personal reflection.

Instructions:



Participants will be working in small groups (3-4 persons). Tell participants:

"Imagine you are creating a brand-new democratic system. You can keep only three democratic principles."

In small groups, participants discuss and choose their three principles. At the end each group briefly presents: "Our democracy would be based on..." and explains their choices.

5. Final Reflection Circle (5 minutes)

Invite participants to complete one of the following sentences (they may choose whichever they prefer):

- * The democratic value that matters most to me is...
- * Today, I learned that democracy...
- * One idea I will take away from this workshop is...

Debriefing and Transition to the next activity

Thank participants for their contributions and summarize the key message:

"Democracy is not only a political system; it is a set of values and principles that shape how people live, communicate and treat one another every day.

We now have a better understanding of what democracy stands for and the values and principles on which it is built. But values alone are not enough. For democracy to work, they need to be translated into decisions and actions. So our next question is: How does democracy work in practice, and who makes decisions at different levels? Let's explore that together."

Annex 1.1. Core Values of Democracy

Democracy is built on a set of shared values that guide how people live together, make decisions, and treat one another. These values form the foundation of democratic societies.

Value	Description
Human Dignity	Every person has inherent worth and deserves to be treated with respect, regardless of their background, identity, abilities, beliefs, or circumstances.
Freedom	People have the right to express their opinions, make personal choices, practice their religion or beliefs, and participate freely in society without fear of discrimination or persecution.
Equality	All people have equal rights, equal opportunities, and should be treated fairly, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background.
Justice	Laws and public institutions should treat everyone fairly, protect people's rights, and provide equal access to justice.
Respect	Democracy encourages people to value and respect the rights, opinions, identities, and experiences of others, even when they hold different views.
Tolerance	Democratic societies accept and value diversity, allowing people with different cultures, beliefs, lifestyles, and opinions to live together peacefully.
Inclusion	Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in education, employment, community life, and decision-making, without facing barriers or exclusion.
Solidarity	People support one another, especially those facing disadvantages or discrimination, and work together to strengthen their communities.
Participation	Citizens are encouraged to actively engage in public life by voting, volunteering, joining community initiatives, expressing their opinions, and contributing to decisions that affect their lives.

Human Rights

Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that belong to every person simply because they are human. They are universal, inalienable, and apply equally to everyone. Examples include the right to education, freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, the right to vote, the right to work, the right to privacy, the right to live free from discrimination and violence, and the right to participate in public life.

Annex 1.2. Principles of Democracy

Values tell us what democracy aims to protect. Principles explain how democracy protects these values in practice.

Principle	Description
Popular Sovereignty	Political power belongs to the people, who choose their representatives or make decisions through democratic processes.
Free and Fair Elections	Elections are held regularly and allow citizens to vote freely, equally, and without intimidation.
Rule of Law	Everyone, including those in government, is subject to and accountable under the law.
Equality Before the Law	All people are treated equally by the legal system regardless of their background, identity, or social status.
Protection of Human Rights	Democracy safeguards the fundamental rights and freedoms of every individual, including freedom of expression, association, religion, and privacy.
Political Pluralism	Different political parties, opinions, and interest groups can exist, express their views, and compete freely.
Participation	Citizens have the right and opportunity to take part in public life, decision-making, and community activities.
Accountability	Leaders and public officials must explain their decisions, act in the public interest, and accept responsibility for the outcomes of their actions.
Transparency	Government decisions and public institutions operate openly, allowing citizens to access information and monitor public actions.
Separation of Powers	Legislative, executive, and judicial powers are divided to prevent the concentration and abuse of authority.

Independent Judiciary	Courts operate independently and apply the law fairly, impartially, and without political influence.
Respect for Minority Rights	Democracy protects the rights and freedoms of minority groups while respecting the decisions of the majority.
Freedom of Expression and Independent Media	People are free to express their opinions, while independent media provide diverse information and help hold those in power accountable.

Annex 1.3. Case studies for Democracy Detectives

Case Study A: Freedom of Expression

A student publishes an article expressing criticism of school policies. The article is removed without explanation, and the student is warned not to share similar opinions again.

Questions

1. What is happening in this situation?
2. What is unfair or problematic?
3. Which democratic value or principle is missing or violated?
4. How could the situation be improved?

Case Study B: Equality

A youth project accepts applications only from participants from selected schools, excluding many young people from the community.

Questions

1. What is happening in this situation?
2. What is unfair or problematic?
3. Which democratic value or principle is missing or violated?
4. How could the situation be improved?

Case Study C: Respect and Inclusion

During a group discussion, some participants continuously interrupt others and dismiss their opinions without listening.

Questions

1. What is happening in this situation?
2. What is unfair or problematic?
3. Which democratic value or principle is missing or violated?
4. How could the situation be improved?

Case Study D: Rule of Law and Fairness

The organizers of a competition change the selection criteria after all applications have already been submitted.

Questions

1. What is happening in this situation?
2. What is unfair or problematic?
3. Which democratic value or principle is missing or violated?

4. How could the situation be improved?

Annex 1.4. Cards for the Democratic Values Auction

FREEDOM

GIRLS IN
DEMOCRACY



Co
the

EQUALITY

GIRLS IN
DEMOCRACY



Co
the

HUMAN RIGHTS

GIRLS IN
DEMOCRACY



Co
the

JUSTICE



Co
the

RESPECT



Co
the

INCLUSION



Co
the

TOLERANCE



Co
the

SOLIDARIY



Co
the



Co-funded by
the European Union

ACTIVITY 2 – Democracy in Action – Levels of Governance

Duration: 45 minutes

Objective: To strengthen participants' understanding of how democracy functions at local, regional, national and European levels by exploring democratic institutions, decision-making processes, and the responsibilities of different levels of governance, while encouraging reflection on how citizens can influence public decisions.

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- * identify the four main levels of democratic governance: local, regional, national and European Union
- * recognise the main democratic institutions operating at each level and describe their basic roles and responsibilities
- * distinguish which public decisions are made at different levels of governance
- * identify who is responsible for different types of public decisions
- * recognise that public decisions affect different groups of people and communities.

Materials:

- * four signs: Local, Regional, National, European Union
- * Annex 2.1. Cards with Institutions
- * Annex 2.2. Key Institutions and Their Roles (optional)
- * case study papers (four stations)
- * flipchart paper and A4 paper
- * markers, pens
- * computer, projector and internet connection (optional, for the Annex 2 and educational videos).

Additional materials (videos, websites)

- * [What is the European Union?](#)
- * [How does the European Union work? | Ian Bremmer Explains](#)
- * [Promoting Democracy and Good Governance in Europe - Portal](#)

Facilitator's note:

Look for videos in your language that present your country's democratic system.

Example: [PL ZROZUM POLITYKĘ W POLSCE W 8 MINUT](#)



Step-by-step

1. Introduction – Where does this belong? (10 minutes)

Objective: Activate prior knowledge and introduce levels of governance in a physical, engaging way.

Setup:

Put 4 signs in the room: LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL, EUROPEAN UNION

Instructions:

Facilitator says: “I will read different situations. Your task is to go to the place where you think this decision is made.”

Statements:

- * Setting rules for school education
- * Modernising train connections to the regional capital.
- * Introducing a new bus line in your city
- * Introducing common rules for consumer protection across the EU
- * Building a new park in your neighbourhood
- * Setting the minimum wage
- * Opening a new regional hospital
- * Introducing environmental regulations for all EU countries
- * Reducing the income tax
- * Increasing property taxes

Correct answers: 1. National; 2. Regional; 3. Local; 4. European Union; 5. Local; 6. National; 7. Regional, 8. European Union; 9. National; 10. Local.

After each round ask:

- * “Why did you choose this level?”
- * “Was it easy or difficult to decide?”

Facilitator explanation (short input):

“Democracy is not one system – it is a multi-level system. Decisions are made at different levels depending on their scope:

Local → everyday life (transport, schools, parks)

Regional → infrastructure, development

National → laws, taxes, education system

EU → common rules for member states”.

2. Input through discovery – “Who is responsible?” (15 min)

Setup:

Group work (4 small groups)

Each group gets a set of cards with institutions (Annex 2.1).

Cards include: City Council, Mayor, Regional government (Regional Executive), Regional Assembly, National Parliament, Government (Prime Minister), European Parliament, European Commission, European Council.

Instructions:

Facilitator says: “Match each institution to the correct level: local, regional, national, or European Union. You can discuss in your group.”

After 2–4 minutes, ask the groups to share their answers. Facilitate a short discussion to clarify any differences and agree on the correct answers.

Facilitator explanation (Annex 2.2):

Key Institutions and Their Roles - local level

City Council - Makes local laws, approves the city/local community budget, and decides on local services such as roads, parks, schools, and public transport.

Mayor - Leads the local government, implements local policies, manages public services, and represents the city.

Key Institutions and Their Roles - regional level

Regional Assembly - Makes decisions about regional development, approves the regional budget, and oversees the work of the regional government.

Regional Government (Regional Executive) - Leads the regional executive government, implements regional policies, manages regional administration, and oversees the use of regional and EU funds.

Key Institutions and Their Roles - national level

National Parliament - Makes national laws, approves the state budget, and oversees the work of the government.

Government (Prime Minister) - Implements national laws, develops national policies, manages public administration, and runs the country's day-to-day affairs.

Key Institutions and Their Roles - European Union level

European Parliament - Represents EU citizens, adopts EU laws together with the Council of the European Union, approves the EU budget, and supervises other EU institutions.

European Commission - Proposes new EU laws, implements EU policies, manages the EU budget, and ensures that EU law is applied across all Member States.

European Council - Brings together the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States to set the EU's overall political priorities and strategic direction.

Facilitator's note:

You may also ask participants: "Do you know the names of your current mayor, regional leader, prime minister, and the President of the European Commission?"

Optional: At the end of the activity, distribute or display on the projector *Annex 2.2 - Key Institutions and Their Roles*. Use it to explain a little bit more about the roles and responsibilities of institutions at the local, regional, national, and European Union levels.

If time permits, invite participants to watch a short educational video explaining how the European Union and their country are governed, reinforcing the key concepts introduced during the activity (See: Additional materials).

3. Democracy in Practice: Case Study Carousel (20 min)

Setup:

4 stations in the room, each with a case study. Station cases should be written on the sheet of paper (A4 or bigger).

Station cases:

- * Station 1 – Local: A city wants to build a new shopping centre, but residents are divided.
- * Station 2 – Regional: A regional authority decides to close small hospitals and centralise services.

- * Station 3 – National: The government introduces a new education reform affecting all schools.
- * Station 4 – EU: The European Union introduces new rules about plastic packaging.

Instructions (facilitator says):

“You will rotate in groups. At each station, read the situation and answer four questions.”

Questions at each station:

- * Which level of democracy is involved?
- * Who makes the decision?
- * Who can influence the decision?
- * Who is affected? Think not only about institutions, but also about people who are affected.

Ask participants to write brief notes to support the final group discussion. Participants have 3-4 minutes for each station.

Reflection and debrief (final group discussion).

After all groups visited all stations, facilitator asks:

- * Which case study was the easiest to analyse? Why?
- * Which level feels closest to your everyday life?
- * Do you think the people and organisations affected by these decisions have enough opportunities to influence them?

4. Debriefing and Transition to the Next Activity

Facilitator says:

"In this activity we have seen that democracy is a multi-level system. Different decisions are made at the local, regional, national and European levels, and different institutions are responsible for making them.

But understanding who makes decisions is only one part of democracy. Democracy also depends on citizens who are informed, engaged and willing to take part in public

life. Public decisions are not made in isolation—they are often shaped by the voices, ideas and actions of individuals, communities and organisations.

This leads us to an important question: How can citizens influence these decisions? In the next activity, we will explore the different forms of civic participation and discover that voting is only one of many ways people can contribute to democratic life and create positive change in their communities."

Annex 2.1. Cards with Institutions

City Council	Mayor	Regional government (Regional Executive)
Regional Assembly	National Parliament	Government (Prime Minister)
European Parliament	European Commission	European Council

Annex 2.1. Key Institutions and Their Roles

Institution	Role
City Council	Makes local laws, approves the city/local community budget, and decides on local services such as roads, parks, schools, and public transport.
Mayor	Leads the local government, implements local policies, manages public services, and represents the city.
Regional Assembly	Makes decisions about regional development, approves the regional budget, and oversees the work of the regional government.
Regional Government (Regional Executive)	Leads the regional executive government, implements regional policies, manages regional administration, and oversees the use of regional and EU funds.
National Parliament	Makes national laws, approves the state budget, and oversees the work of the government.
Government (Prime Minister)	Implements national laws, develops national policies, manages public administration, and runs the country's day-to-day affairs.
European Parliament	Represents EU citizens, adopts EU laws together with the Council of the European Union, approves the EU budget, and supervises other EU institutions.
European Commission	Proposes new EU laws, implements EU policies, manages the EU budget, and ensures that EU law is applied across all Member States.
European Council	Brings together the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States to set the EU's overall political priorities and strategic direction.

ACTIVITY 3 – Civic Participation and Role of Citizens

Duration: 45 minutes

Objective: To increase participants' awareness of the many ways citizens can participate in democratic life and influence public decision-making, while encouraging them to identify forms of civic engagement that match their interests, values and strengths.

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- * identify different forms of civic participation
- * recognise that active citizenship can take many different forms
- * reflect on their own interests and preferences regarding civic engagement
- * understand the importance of citizens' participation for the functioning of democracy
- * identify simple ways in which they can become more actively involved in their communities.

Materials:

- * flipchart or whiteboard
- * markers
- * Civic Participation Cards and stickers or adhesive notes with colours: green, yellow, red (Annex 3.1)
- * adhesive tape

Step-by-step

1. Introduction – How Can Citizens Make a Difference? (10 minutes)

Objective: To activate participants' prior knowledge and introduce the wide range of ways in which citizens can participate in democratic life and influence public decisions.

Instructions:

Begin by asking participants:

“Let's create a list of the different ways citizens can make a difference, influence decision-making and contribute to positive change in their communities.”

Invite participants to share as many ideas as possible. Record all responses on a flipchart or whiteboard without commenting on whether they are right or wrong.

Encourage participants to think broadly and consider both formal and informal ways of participating in democratic life.

If needed, prompt the discussion by asking:

- * Can citizens influence decisions only during elections?
- * What can people do between elections?
- * How can young people make their voices heard, even if they are not politicians?

After collecting participants' ideas, briefly review the list and add any important forms of civic participation that were not mentioned, such as:

- * voting in elections;
- * taking part in public consultations;
- * signing petitions;
- * contacting elected representatives;
- * joining youth councils or community groups;
- * participating in peaceful demonstrations;
- * attending public meetings or community discussions;
- * taking part in participatory budgeting;
- * volunteering or organising community initiatives;
- * raising awareness through campaigns or social media.

Conclude by saying:

“There are many different ways to participate in democratic life. Some require only a few minutes, while others involve long-term commitment. Some people enjoy speaking in public, while others prefer working behind the scenes. In the next activity, you will explore these different forms of civic participation and reflect on which ones best match your interests, values and personality.”

2. Civic Match – Finding Your Way to Participate (15 minutes)

Objective: To encourage participants to reflect on different forms of civic participation and recognise that active citizenship can take many forms depending on individual interests, values, and preferences.

Instructions:

Display on the walls the Civic Participation Cards (*Annex 3.1*). Explain that each poster represents one form of civic participation.

Give each participant one sticker or a coloured adhesive note in each colour (green, yellow and red) for each poster. You may use the colours provided in Annex 3.1.

Invite participants to walk around the room, read each poster, and place one sticker on every poster according to how they feel about that particular form of participation:

GREEN This fits me – I could realistically imagine myself doing this.

YELLOW Maybe – I might try this in the future, but I am not sure yet.

RED Not for me – This is not something I would choose.

Encourage participants to make their own decisions without discussing them during this stage.

Civic Participation Cards (*Annex 3.1*) include:

-  Voting in elections
-  Signing a petition
-  Taking part in public consultations
-  Attending public meetings or community discussions
-  Contacting elected representatives
-  Joining a youth council
-  Joining a community group or local NGO
-  Volunteering
-  Organising a community initiative
-  Participatory budgeting
-  Raising awareness through a campaign
-  Using social media for civic action
-  Participating in a peaceful demonstration

 Sharing your opinion through local media

 Joining a political party (optional – depending on participants' age and national context)

Group Discussion

When everyone has finished, invite the group to walk around the room and observe the results.

Facilitate a discussion using questions such as:

- * Which forms of civic participation received the most green stickers?
- * Which received the most red stickers?
- * Were you surprised by any of the results?
- * Which activities seem the most accessible for young women?
- * Which require the greatest confidence or commitment?
- * Did you discover any forms of participation that you had not considered before?

3. Critical reflection activity – What if citizens do nothing? (10 min)

Instructions (facilitator says):

“Now imagine a democracy where people do NOT participate, do not vote, and do not express opinions.”

Group discussion questions:

- * What could happen at the local level?
 - * What could happen at the national level?
 - * What could happen in the EU system?
 - * Who would have the most power?

4. Closing activity – One message to citizens (5 min)

Instructions (facilitator says):

“In one sentence, complete this: ‘If citizens do not participate in democracy, then...’.”

Participants share one by one.

Final message and transition to the next activity

Facilitator says:

“In this activity we have explored the many different ways citizens can participate in democratic public life. We have seen that active citizenship is not limited to voting or becoming a politician. Every person can contribute in different ways, depending on their interests, skills, values and opportunities.

Democracy becomes stronger when people participate, share their ideas, listen to others and take responsibility for their communities. Even small actions can make a meaningful difference when many people become involved.

At the same time, participating responsibly also means making informed decisions. To influence democracy effectively, we need to know how to recognise reliable information, question misleading messages and make informed choices.

In the next activity, we will explore why media and information literacy is an essential part of active citizenship and how it helps us participate in democracy in an informed and responsible way.”

Annex 3.1. Civic Participation Cards



Voting in elections



Signing a petition



**Taking part in public
consultations**



**Attending public meetings
or community discussions**



Contacting elected representatives



Joining a youth council



Joining a community group or local NGO



Volunteering



Organising a community initiative



Participatory budgeting



Using social media for civic action



Participating in a peaceful demonstration



Sharing your opinion through local media

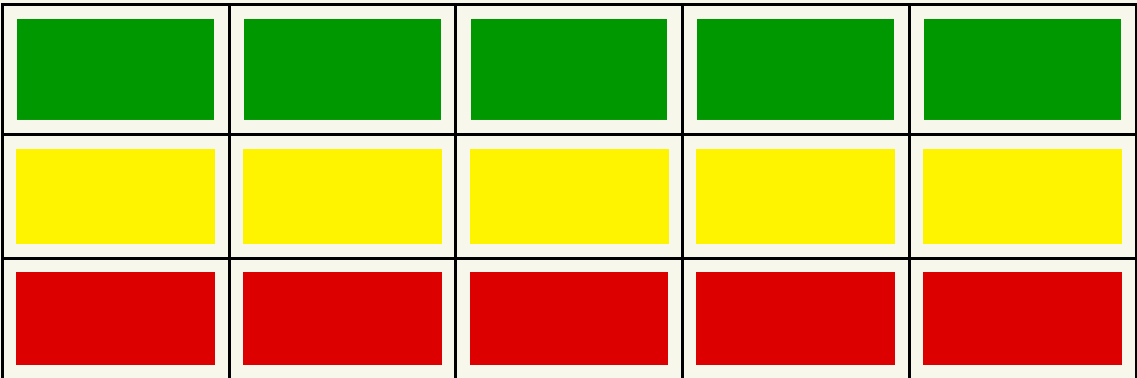
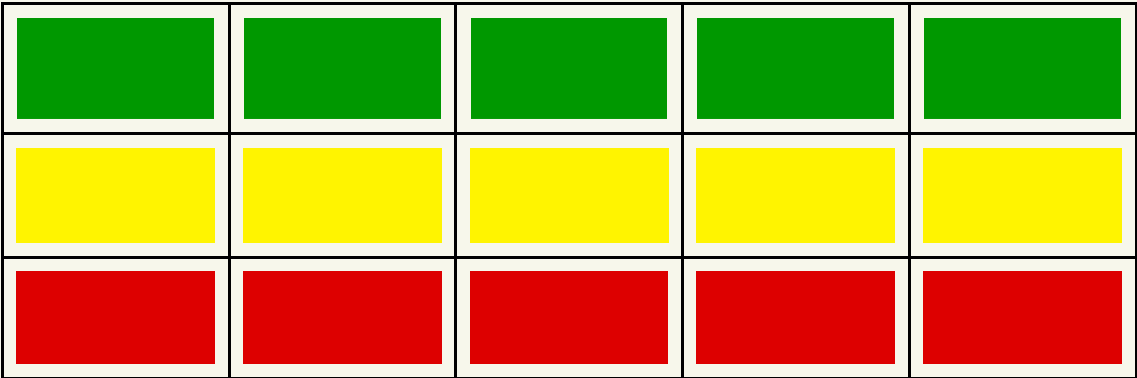
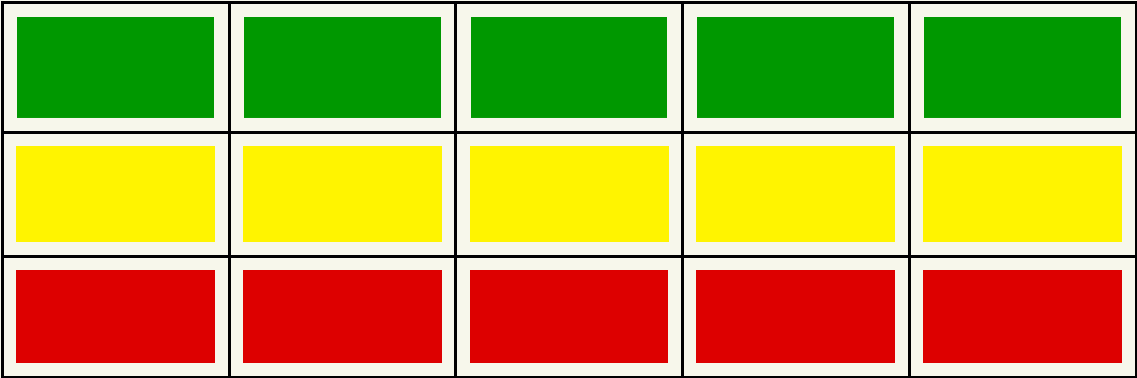


Joining a political party



Raising awareness through a campaign

A set of stickers for each participant



ACTIVITY 4 – Fact-Check Challenge – Navigating Information in Democracy

Duration: 60 minutes

Objective: To strengthen participants' media and information literacy by developing their ability to critically evaluate online information, recognise misinformation and disinformation, and make informed decisions before sharing content in democratic and digital spaces.

By the end of the activity, participants will be able to:

- * distinguish between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation
- * identify common warning signs of misleading online content
- * apply simple fact-checking techniques to verify information from different sources
- * critically assess the credibility of online posts, images, statistics and quotations
- * recognise the importance of responsible information sharing for democratic participation.

Materials:

- * Annex 4.1 Examples of social media posts and images
- * Annex 4.2 Tips for Verifying Online Information (optional)
- * Annex 4.3 Emoticons (one set per participants)
- * flipchart paper
- * markers;
- * sticky notes (optional)
- * internet access
- * computers, tablets or smartphones for the use of participants
- * projector or screen (recommended).

Step-by-step

1. Introduction – Would You Share It? (10 minutes)

Objective: Introduce the topic and demonstrate how quickly people make judgements based on first impressions.

Instructions:



Display five online posts one at a time (Annex 4.1) and each time ask the question: "Would you share it?".

Ask participants to respond by raising the emoticon that best represents their answer:

❤️ - I would share it.

❌ - I would not share it.

😬 - I am not sure.

After each example explain:

Example 1 – Health Misinformation

Explain that the claim sounds convincing because it promotes a "natural remedy" and suggests that important information is being deliberately hidden. Point out that similar claims have repeatedly been debunked by independent fact-checking organisations, such as Full Fact (UK), AFP Fact Check, EUvsDisinfo, and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO).

Remind participants that they should always consult a qualified healthcare professional before following medical advice found online or trying alternative treatments.

Example 2 – AI-Generated Political Image

This image appears to show the official G7 Summit family photo, taken in Italy in 2024. However, it is AI-generated. One clue is that the same woman (Ursula von der Leyen) appears twice in the photograph. AI-generated images can still contain mistakes, although these are becoming less frequent as the technology improves.

Optional note: In English, the term family photo does not refer to relatives. It is the traditional diplomatic name for the official group photograph taken at international summits, symbolising cooperation among the participating leaders.

Discuss how realistic AI-generated images can be and why they should always be verified. Ask participants how they could check whether an image might be AI-generated. Encourage them to:

- * check the source of the image;
- * perform a reverse image search using tools such as Google Images or TinEye;

- * examine details for inconsistencies, such as distorted hands, faces, text, reflections, or shadows;
- * look for contextual information about where and when the image was taken;
- * verify whether reliable news organisations are reporting the same event; and
- * consider whether the image is intended to provoke a strong emotional reaction.

Remind participants that even realistic images may be AI-generated or digitally manipulated and should always be verified before being trusted or shared.

Example 3 – Misleading Protest Image

Explain that the image is genuine but has been presented in a false context. The photograph was taken by photojournalist Bernie Boston during an anti-war protest at the Pentagon in 1967, where demonstrator George Harris placed carnations into soldiers' gun barrels.

Emphasise that authentic images can still be misleading when they are accompanied by false information about the date, location, or event. Encourage participants to verify the original context of an image before trusting or sharing it.

Example 4 – Fake Statistic

Explain that the statistic cannot be verified because no source is provided, the research is not identified, and there is no evidence to support the claim. Emphasise that precise figures are not necessarily reliable simply because they appear specific. Participants should always check where statistics come from and whether they are supported by credible research.

Example 5 – Quote Taken Out of Context

Explain that the original quotation is: Our values do not change. But to defend these values in a changing world, we must change the way we act.

Point out that the quotation comes from a speech by Ursula von der Leyen at the World Economic Forum and refers to the changing geopolitical situation, international relations, and the need for the European Union to adapt to new global challenges. It does not refer to introducing a new tax.

Also explain that the accompanying claim is unlikely because the European Union cannot introduce a tax on petrol or diesel cars across all Member States. Decisions on most taxes remain the responsibility of national governments. Encourage

participants to consider whether the institution mentioned in a claim actually has the authority to make the decision being described.

After discussing all five examples, ask:

- * Why did you trust some posts more than others?
- * What made you hesitate?

2. Facilitator's Input – What Is Fake News and How to Spot It (5 minutes)

Explain briefly:

“Every day we receive hundreds of pieces of information online. Some are accurate, some are misleading, and some are deliberately created to manipulate opinions or emotions. Being able to evaluate information critically is an essential democratic skill.”

Introduce the terms:

Misinformation:

False or inaccurate information that is shared without the intention to deceive.

The person sharing it often believes it is true and does not realise it is incorrect.

Example: Someone shares an outdated news article, thinking it is current.

Disinformation:

False information that is deliberately created or shared to mislead, manipulate, or deceive others. Its purpose is to influence opinions, create confusion, or cause harm.

Example: A fake social media post is created to influence public opinion before an election.

Malinformation (optional if appropriate for the group):

True information that is shared intentionally to cause harm, mislead, or manipulate. The information itself is accurate, but it is presented in a way that invades privacy, damages someone's reputation, or is taken out of context.

Example: Publishing someone's private messages or sharing a genuine photo without context to damage their reputation.

Present five simple questions that should always be asked before believing or sharing information.

Display them on a flipchart/slide presentation.

STOP and CHECK

- * Who created this information?
- * What evidence supports it?
- * Is the headline trying to provoke a strong emotional reaction?
- * Can the claim be verified using another reliable source?
- * Is the content current and presented in its full context?

Explain that participants will now use these questions as investigators but they will also try to mislead others.

3. Fact-Check Challenge (30 minutes)

Divide participants into small groups of 3–4 people.

Explain that each group should create two social media posts or pieces of news: one containing false or misleading information and one containing accurate information. Participants may use smartphones, tablets or computers, if available.

The fake news may include one or more of the following:

- * a sensational headline without a source;
- * a manipulated statistic;
- * a misleading graph;
- * an AI-generated image;
- * a quote taken out of context;
- * a fake social media account;
- * an edited photograph;
- * a clickbait article;
- * a conspiracy-style post; or
- * a misleading short video.

After 20 minutes, ask them to exchange their materials with another group.

Each group analyses the received material using the 5 questions and decides which information is reliable and which one is misleading, providing reasons to support their conclusions.

Sharing in the Forum (10 minutes)

Each group presents the examples they analysed and briefly explains:

- * what made the content convincing;
- * which warning signs they identified;
- * how they verified the information;
- * their final judgement on whether the content was reliable or misleading.

4. Reflection – Why Does Misinformation Spread? (5 minutes)

The facilitator leads a short discussion.

Possible questions:

- * Why do people believe false information?
- * Why do emotional posts spread faster than factual ones?
- * Have you ever shared information that later turned out to be inaccurate?
- * Why is verifying information important in a democracy?
- * What can each of us do to reduce the spread of misinformation?

5. Facilitator Summary

Conclude by emphasising:

“Democracy depends on informed citizens. Decisions made during elections, public debates and everyday civic life should be based on reliable information rather than rumours or manipulation.

Everyone - not only journalists or experts - has a responsibility to think critically before sharing information online.”

Optional:

Introduce Media and Information Literacy (MIL) by saying:



“What we have strengthened with this session is our Media and Information Literacy (MIL).

MIL refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable people to access, critically evaluate, create, and share information and media content in a responsible and informed way (Adapted from UNESCO).”

More Tips for Verifying Online Information (Annex 4.2)

If you have more time available, you can also use Annex 4.2 as part of the activity Fact-Check Challenge (instead of 5 questions). Please note that participants will need additional time to read and familiarise themselves with the material.

If time is limited, you may send Annex 4.2 to participants after the workshop or provide them with a printed copy to read independently.

Transition to the next Activity

"With this activity we have explored why access to reliable information and critical thinking are essential for active citizenship.

However, even when people have access to accurate information, not everyone has the same opportunities to participate in democratic life or feel equally confident to make their voices heard.

This brings us to another important question: Who participates in democracy, and are all voices equally represented? In the next activity, we will explore the importance of women's participation in democratic life, the barriers they may face, and why equal representation strengthens democracy."

Annex 4.1. Examples of social media posts and images

Example 1.



Example 2. The leaders of the G7 stand for a family photo at the annual summit on June 13, 2024, in Italy.



Example 3

This photograph shows the first LGBTQ+ rights protest in Europe in 1967.

Demonstrators peacefully placed flowers into soldiers' rifles to protest discrimination and demand equal rights.



Example 4



Example 5

Is the EU about to introduce a 90% tax on the purchase of petrol and diesel cars?
"We must change the way we act" - said Ursula von der Leyen.



Annex 4.2. Tips for Verifying Online Information

TIPS FOR VERIFYING ONLINE INFORMATION

BEFORE YOU BELIEVE OR SHARE: STOP AND CHECK!

1 CHECK THE SOURCE

- Who published the information?
- Is it a trusted news outlet, official organisation, or random website or account?
- Look for contact details and information about the organisation or author.

2 RESEARCH THE AUTHOR

- Who is the author?
- Are they qualified or an expert on this topic?
- Do they have a history of reliability?
- Beware of anonymous or fake profiles.

3 CHECK THE DATE

- When was the information published?
- Is it up to date?
- Old news or images can be shared out of context.

4 CROSS-CHECK SOURCES

- Check the same information in more than one reliable source.
- If other trusted news outlets aren't reporting it, be cautious.
- Don't rely on a single source.

5 IDENTIFY DATA AND FIGURES

- Are statistics or data provided?
- Is the source of the data clearly stated?
- Check if numbers are accurate and not taken out of context.

6 ANALYZE THE CONTENT

- Read beyond the headline.
- What is the main message?
- Is the content trying to inform, entertain, or provoke a strong emotional reaction?
- Could someone benefit from you believing or sharing it?

7 THINK BEFORE YOU SHARE

- Have you checked all the key points?
- Are you sure it's accurate?
- If in doubt, don't share.

USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Web Browser

Search for the original source of a claim.

Reverse Image Search

Use tools like TinEye to check where an image comes from.

Full Fact

Independent fact-checking organisation.

AFP Fact Check

Verifies viral claims and misinformation from around the world.

European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)

Access fact-checks from across Europe.

Official Websites

Check official announcements, policies, legislation, and statistics on government or EU institution websites.

Trusted News Organisations

Compare information from multiple reliable news outlets.

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REMEMBER:
Not everything you see online is true. Taking a few minutes to verify information helps prevent the spread of misinformation and supports informed democratic participation.

Inspiringgirls

kolektiv

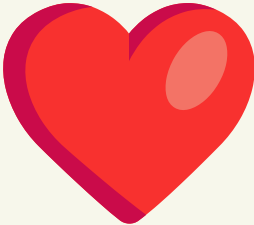
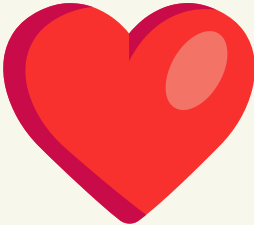
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Annex 4.3. Emoticons

ACTIVITY 5 – Women in democracy – Representation and Participation

Duration: 60 minutes

Objective: To strengthen participants' understanding of women's political representation and participation in Europe, while encouraging critical reflection on gender stereotypes, barriers to political engagement, and the importance of diverse voices in democratic decision-making.

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- * recognise common gender stereotypes associated with women and men in politics
- * describe key facts and trends concerning women's political representation in the European Union and the project partner countries
- * explain why balanced and diverse political representation matters for democracy
- * identify barriers that may discourage girls and women from participating in political life
- * discuss measures that can support women's representation in politics
- * identify different ways in which young women can influence political decisions beyond standing for election
- * reflect on one practical action they could take to make their own voice heard.

Materials:

- * two flipchart posters titled Women in Politics and Men in Politics
- * flipchart poster titled Our Democratic Voices
- * sticky notes;
- * pens and markers
- * answer cards with the letters A, B and C for each participant or group
- * presentation slides or printed fact sheets on women's political representation in Europe (Annex 6.1)
- * discussion cards for Groups A–D
- * large sheets of paper for group work
- * projector and screen, if using a digital presentation
- * tape or reusable adhesive.

Step-by-step

1. Opening Activity – Let's Shake Hands: Women and Men in Politics (15 minutes)

Objective: To explore participants' spontaneous associations with women and men in politics and link them to the topic of gender stereotypes and political representation.

Instructions:

Begin with a short practice round using participants' names to explain the rules.

Participants move freely around the room. When they meet someone, they shake hands and introduce themselves using their own name (e.g. Sonja meets Ann). When they meet the next person, they again shake hands but they introduce themselves using the name of the person they met previously (e.g. Sonja introduces herself as Ann when she meets Sofia, then as Sofia when she meets the next participant, and so on). The name they are carrying is exchanged with each new handshake.

Once participants understand the rules, explain that they will repeat the activity, but instead of exchanging names, they will exchange words. Each time they meet someone, they say the word they are currently carrying and then exchange it for the other participant's word before moving on.

Round 1 (3–4 minutes)

Ask participants: “What is the first word or short phrase that comes to mind when you think of a woman politician?”

Participants exchange these words in the same way as they exchanged names.

After several exchanges, ask everyone to write down one or two words they remember most clearly (one word per sticky note).

Participants place them on a poster titled: Women in Politics.

Round 2 (3–4 minutes)

Repeat the activity with the question: “What is the first word or short phrase that comes to mind when you think of a man politician?”

Participants again exchange the words and as previously, they write them on sticky notes and place them on a second poster: Men in Politics.

Debrief (5 minutes)

Ask some of these questions (choose the most appropriate ones):

- * What differences do you notice?
- * Which words appear most often?
- * Which words are linked mainly to men?
- * Which are linked mainly to women?
- * Which words describe competence? Which describe personality or appearance?
- * Are these descriptions based on experience or stereotypes?
- * Would the same behaviour be judged differently depending on whether it was shown by a man or a woman in politics?
- * Is women's participation in politics limited by some of the stereotypes that emerged during this activity?

Transition to the next part:

“We have explored how women are perceived in politics. Now let's look at how women are represented in politics across Europe. ”

Facilitator's note:

Avoid suggesting that all participants hold stereotypes. Instead, explain that the activity explores common social perceptions that many people encounter through family, education, media, and public discourse.

The goal is not to judge individual opinions but to reflect on how stereotypes may influence expectations about political leadership.

2. Reality Check – Women in European Politics. (15 minutes)

Overall objective: To increase participants' awareness of women's political representation in Europe and encourage critical reflection on why equal representation matters for democratic decision-making.



Part 1. Quiz. Guess the Numbers (5 minutes)

Display one question at a time (Annex 5.1).

Ask participants to guess by raising the letters assigned to the answers.

Questions:

1. What percentage of Members of the European Parliament are women?
A/ around 29%
B/ around 39%
C/ around 49%
(correct: B/ 39%)
2. Which EU country has the highest share of women in its national parliament?
A/ France
B/ Spain
C/ Sweden
(correct: C/ Sweden – 45.6%, then Finland – 45.5% and Denmark – 44.7%)
3. Approximately what percentage of members of national parliaments across the EU are women?
A/ 25%
B/ 33%
C/ 48%
(correct: B/ about one third)
4. Do women make up more or less than half of the EU population?
A/ more than half
B/ less than half
C/ the population of men and women is exactly equal
(correct: A/ more than half - 51%)

Participants usually get several answers wrong, which creates curiosity.

Part 2. Interesting facts

Present some interesting facts to the participants (Annex 5.1):

Facts about Women's Political Representation in Europe

1. Women make up around 51% of the population of the European Union, but hold only one in three seats in national parliaments (33.4% in 2024).



2. Women's representation in national parliaments varies greatly across Europe. In 2024, Sweden (45.6%), Finland (45.5%) and Denmark (44.7%) had the highest shares, while Cyprus (14.3%), Hungary (14.6%) and Romania (19.5%) had the lowest.
3. Women are better represented in the European Parliament than in most national parliaments, making up around 39% of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).
4. Since the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the proportion of women has increased from 16.6% to almost 39%, showing significant progress over time.
5. No EU Member State has yet achieved 50% women in its national parliament.
6. Several European countries have introduced gender quotas for electoral candidate lists. These do not guarantee election but aim to ensure that women and men have more equal opportunities to stand for office. Poland requires at least 35% of candidates to be women or men, while Croatia and Portugal require 40%.

Facts from the Project Partner Countries

Poland

1. Women make up 35% of electoral candidates by law, but their representation in political decision-making remains below the EU average. For example, in 2026 women hold 31.5% of the seats in the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament (145 of the 460 members), compared with the EU average of 33.4%.
2. Women's representation in the Polish government has fluctuated over the past decade. It fell from 29% in 2015 to 15% in 2019 before increasing again to around 29% in 2024, still below the EU average of 35%.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Parline https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2026&date_month=06

Croatia

1. Croatia has introduced a 40% gender quota for electoral candidate lists. By law, at least 40% of the candidates on every electoral list must be women and at least 40% must be men.
2. Women are increasingly represented in parliament. Women currently hold 32.7% of the seats in the Croatian Parliament (Sabor) – 49 out of 150 members.
3. They remain underrepresented in senior political positions. Women make up only 10.5% of government ministers and 17.2% of local and regional government leaders.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Parline https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2026&date_month=06

Lithuania

1. Lithuania has recorded one of the largest increases in women's representation in government in the EU over the last decade, with an increase of more than 24 percentage points. However, women currently hold 28.4% of the seats in the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) – 40 out of 141 members.
2. Lithuania does not have legally mandated gender quotas for parliamentary elections. Instead, some political parties voluntarily apply gender quotas when selecting candidates.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Parline https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2026&date_month=06

Portugal

1. Portugal applies a 40% gender quota for parliamentary candidates. Women currently hold 35.7% of the seats in the Portuguese Parliament (Assembly of the Republic) – 82 out of 230 members.
2. Women remain significantly underrepresented in local government leadership. Following the 2025 local elections, only 47 of Portugal's 308 mayors (15.3%) are women.
3. Women hold around one-third of ministerial positions in the Portuguese Government. In 2026, 6 of 17 ministers (35.3%) are women.

Source:
<https://www.cig.gov.pt/2025/05/representacao-de-mulheres-nas-eleicoes-legislativas-de-2025-abaixo-da-meta-legal/>
<https://www1.esev.ipv.pt/dacomunicacao/>
<https://data.ipu.org/parliament/PT/PT-LC01/data-on-women/>

3. Small Group Activity – Why Does Representation Matter? (20 min)

Divide participants into four groups.

Each group receives one discussion card (Annex 5.2) and writes their considerations on a sheet of paper.

Group A

Why is it important that elected representatives reflect different parts of society?

Group B

What barriers might discourage girls and women from entering politics?

Group C



Should political parties introduce measures to increase women's representation?
Why? Why not?

Group D

Apart from becoming elected politicians, what are the most effective ways for young women to influence political decisions?

Groups prepare three key conclusions and then present it to the forum.

4. Debrief – Democracy Needs Different Voices (5 min)

Facilitator summarises and presents key messages:

- * Representation is not about giving women "special treatment."
- * Democracy works best when different experiences and perspectives are represented.
- * Increasing diversity helps institutions better understand society.
- * Political participation is broader than standing for election – young women can effectively influence decisions through many democratic channels.

5. Reflection – My Voice Matters (5 min)

Give participants one sticky note.

Each participant completes the sentence: "One thing I could do to make my voice heard is..."

Participants place notes on a flipchart titled: Our Democratic Voices

Facilitator note

Avoid presenting women only as victims of discrimination. Keep the discussion focused on democratic representation, participation, and opportunities for engagement. Encourage participants to recognise that meaningful political participation takes many forms – not only becoming a Member of Parliament, but also engaging in local initiatives, school or university activities, volunteering, public consultations, or youth councils.

6. FINAL EVALUATION AT THE END OF THE MODULE

For the final evaluation use the questionnaire below:



<https://forms.gle/VwDfuA6Y8F8SCVMj7>



Annex 5.1. Questions and Facts - Women in Democracy

**What percentage
of Members of the European Parliament
are women?**

- A/ around 29%**
- B/ around 39%**
- C/ around 49%**



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**Which EU country has the highest share
of women
in its national parliament?**

- A/ France**
- B/ Spain**
- C/ Sweden**



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**Approximately what percentage of members
of national parliaments across the EU
are women?**

A/ 25%

B/ 33%

C/ 48%



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**Do women make up more or less than half
of the EU population?**

A/ more than half

B/ less than half

**C/ the population of men and women
is exactly equal**



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- Women make up around 51% of the population of the European Union, but hold only one in three seats in national parliaments (33.4% in 2024).
- Women's representation in national parliaments varies greatly across Europe. In 2024, Sweden (45.6%), Finland (45.5%) and Denmark (44.7%) had the highest shares, while Cyprus (14.3%), Hungary (14.6%) and Romania (19.5%) had the lowest.



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- Women are better represented in the European Parliament than in most national parliaments, making up around 39% of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).
- Since the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the proportion of women has increased from 16.6% to almost 39%, showing significant progress over time.



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Poland: Women make up 35% of electoral candidates by law, but their representation in political decision-making remains below the EU average.

For example, in 2026 women hold 31.5% of the seats in the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament (145 of the 460 members), compared with the EU average of 33.4%.

Women's representation in the Polish government has fluctuated over the past decade. It fell from 29% in 2015 to 15% in 2019 before increasing again to around 29% in 2024, still below the EU average of 35%.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Parline
https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2026&date_month=06



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Lithuania has recorded one of the largest increases in women's representation in government in the EU over the last decade, with an increase of more than 24 percentage points.

However, women currently hold 28.4% of the seats in the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) – 40 out of 141 members.

Lithuania does not have legally mandated gender quotas for parliamentary elections. Instead, some political parties voluntarily apply gender quotas when selecting candidates.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Parline
https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2026&date_month=06



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They remain underrepresented in senior political positions. Women make up only 10.5% of government ministers and 17.2% of local and regional government leaders.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Parline
https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2026&date_month=06



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Portugal applies a 40% gender quota for parliamentary candidates. Women currently hold 35.7% of the seats in the Portuguese Parliament (Assembly of the Republic) – 82 out of 230 members.

Women remain significantly underrepresented in local government leadership. Following the 2025 local elections, only 47 of Portugal's 308 mayors (15.3%) are women. Women hold around one-third of ministerial positions in the Portuguese Government. In 2026, 6 of 17 ministers (35.3%) are women.

Sources:

<https://www.cig.gov.pt/2025/05/representacao-de-mulheres-nas-eleicoes-legislativas-de-2025-abaixo-da-meta-legal/>

<https://www1.esev.ipv.pt/dacomunicacao/>

<https://data.ipu.org/parliament/PT/PT-LC01/data-on-women/>



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Annex 5.2. Why Does Representation Matter? Discussion Cards

Group A

Why is it important that elected representatives reflect different parts of society?

Answers:



Group B

What barriers might discourage girls and women from entering politics?

Answers:



Group C

Should political parties introduce measures to increase women's representation?
Why? / Why not?

Answers:



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Group D

Apart from becoming elected politicians, what are the most effective ways
for young women to influence political decisions?

Answers:



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MODULE 3

Leadership and Strategic Thinking

Duration of the whole module (minutes): 210

1. Key Concepts and Topics

The module serves as a bridge between personal empowerment, understanding social challenges and future collective action. It connects personal leadership development, strategic thinking and desired change, helping participants recognise their own leadership potential, understand challenges more thoughtfully and identify the kind of change they would like to see in their school, organisation or community.

A cross-cutting focus throughout the module is strengthening participants' confidence, sense of agency and belief in their own ability to contribute to change. By recognising their strengths, leadership potential, existing resources and sources of support, participants are encouraged to see themselves not only as people affected by social issues, but also as people who can influence their environment and take part in shaping change.

Leadership is explored beyond formal roles and positions of authority. Participants reflect on leadership as everyday influence expressed through initiative, responsibility, values, care, courage, reliability, support and the ability to create space for participation and change. Particular attention is given to quieter and less visible forms of leadership, recognising that leadership does not always mean being the loudest or most dominant person. Listening, empathy, consistency, trust and support can also shape groups and communities. Participants connect these different forms of leadership with their own values, strengths, ways of contributing and areas for growth.

A gender perspective is integrated into the topic by exploring how gender norms and expectations can influence who is recognised, encouraged or discouraged from taking leadership roles. Participants reflect on how women's leadership may be recognised, overlooked or limited, and how social expectations can affect young women's confidence, voice, initiative and participation.

Strategic thinking is introduced as a structured and deliberate way of approaching problems and challenges. It encourages participants to pause before reacting, distinguish facts from assumptions, consider different perspectives and identify what information, voices or support may still be missing. The focus is not on developing a full strategy or action plan, but on creating a more thoughtful basis for deciding how to respond and what kind of change may be needed.

From this clearer understanding of a challenge, participants move towards imagining a preferred future and identifying the positive change they would like to see. They explore

realistic and observable signs of progress, as well as existing strengths, resources, supportive people, organisations and opportunities that could contribute to change. This solution-focused perspective acknowledges inequality and structural barriers while also helping participants recognise possibilities, support and existing capacities.

Throughout the module, participants are encouraged to strengthen their sense of agency and voice and to recognise that they and their peers can express ideas, seek support, influence their environment and contribute to change.

The ideas and directions identified in this module can later be further developed into concrete objectives, target groups, messages and actions within the Advocacy module.

2. Specific objectives (2-3)

1

To support participants in recognising their own leadership potential by reflecting on their personal values, strengths, ways of acting and areas for further development, while broadening their understanding of leadership as something that can be practised in everyday situations, not only through formal leadership roles.

2

To strengthen participants' strategic thinking by encouraging them to examine problems and challenges more thoughtfully, distinguish facts from assumptions, and consider different perspectives before deciding how to act.

3

To guide participants in imagining the desired change and identifying realistic directions, resources and support that can help them take future action in their school, organisation or community.

3. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will be able to recognise their own leadership potential and different forms of leadership, examine challenges through simple strategic questions, describe a desired positive change, identify signs of progress, existing strengths, resources and support, and strengthen their confidence and sense of agency in contributing to future action.

KNOWLEDGE

- * Describe different forms of leadership, including formal, informal, visible and less visible forms of leadership.

- * Identify different sources of influence, including formal roles, knowledge, trust, lived experience, care, courage, persistence and personal values.
- * Explain how gender norms, stereotypes and expectations can influence leadership, confidence and participation.
- * Explain strategic thinking as a process of pausing before acting, checking assumptions and considering different perspectives.
- * Describe how focusing on a desired future, signs of progress, existing strengths, resources and support can help prepare for future action.

SKILLS

- * Identify personal values, strengths, ways of contributing and areas for further development, and recognise their own leadership potential, including quieter and less visible forms of leadership.
- * Use simple strategic questions to distinguish facts from assumptions and identify missing perspectives, information or support.
- * Describe a desired positive change and identify observable signs of progress.
- * Identify existing strengths, resources and sources of support, and define a realistic direction for future action.

ATTITUDES

- * Value different forms of leadership, including care, listening, support, reliability, responsibility and creating space for others.
- * Show openness to critically reflecting on gender norms and expectations that may influence who is recognised or encouraged to lead and participate.
- * Remain open to different perspectives and recognise the value of pausing and reflecting before reacting.
- * Develop confidence and willingness to use their voice, seek support and act in line with their values.
- * Strengthen their sense of agency, cooperation and shared responsibility for contributing to positive change.

4. Link to other modules:

This module builds on themes introduced in the Gender Equality and Civic Participation modules and prepares participants to develop more concrete ideas and actions in the Advocacy module. It helps participants connect what they learn about themselves with

a broader understanding of their role in groups, communities and democratic society, and how they can contribute to positive change.

Gender Equality: The gender perspective introduced earlier is carried into discussions on leadership, visibility and participation. Participants consider how social expectations may shape opportunities to lead and be heard, while also reflecting on their own capacities and development.

Civic Participation: The module helps participants relate personal leadership and decision-making to participation in school, organisations, communities and democratic society more broadly. It encourages them to approach participation not only as involvement, but also as a process of understanding situations, making informed choices and engaging with others.

Advocacy: The ideas developed around desired change provide a starting point for the next module. Rather than beginning advocacy planning from scratch, participants enter the Advocacy module with a clearer sense of what matters to them, what change they would like to contribute to and what existing support or possibilities they can build on.

5. Module activities overview:

ACTIVITY	DURATION	METHOD
Opening - Module Introduction	10 min	Short presentation + group agreement + expectations check-in
Activity 1. Leadership in One Word	10 min	Brainstorming + plenary discussion
Activity 2. Women Who Influenced Us	20 min	Individual reflection + storytelling + discussion
Activity 3. My Leadership Profile	30 min	Self-reflection + worksheet + pair work
Activity 4. Leadership Myths and Gender Expectations (optional)	20 min	Attitude scale + movement-based reflection + discussion
Activity 5. From Reaction to Strategy	45 min	Short input + scenario analysis + small-group discussion

Activity 6. Towards Desired Change	60 min	Guided group work + future-oriented reflection + support mapping
Closing Reflection	15 min	Individual reflection + pair share + closing circle
TOTAL	210 min / 3,5 hours	

OPENING - Module Introduction

Duration: 10 min

Objective: To introduce the module, clarify its learning journey and establish a respectful and participatory learning environment.

Materials:

- PPT, post it, pens

Step-by-step

Introduce the module - present the learning journey and explain that the module is not about becoming a “perfect leader” or immediately solving a problem. It is about recognising personal and collective capacities, understanding situations more clearly and exploring possibilities for change. (5 min)

Group agreement on respectful listening, confidentiality, no pressure to share personal experiences and openness to different perspectives and leadership styles. (2 min)

Expectations check-in by asking them “What would you like to understand or feel more confident about by the end of this module?” Invite a few brief responses. (3 min)

Facilitator note

Keep the opening short. Its purpose is to orient participants and create a safe learning environment rather than introduce the module content in detail.

ACTIVITY 1 – Leadership in One Word

Duration: 10 min



Objective: To explore participants' initial associations with leadership and introduce leadership as something that can take place beyond formal roles and positions.

Materials:

- Flipchart or board
- Markers

Step-by-step

Ask participants to share one word they associate with leadership and write their responses on a flipchart or board. (1min)

Guide group discussion about leadership(7 min).

- What do these words tell us about how we understand leadership?
- Which qualities appear most often?
- Which forms or qualities of leadership might be missing?

Explain that leadership can be understood as influencing, supporting or guiding others towards something that matters. It is not limited to formal positions and can be expressed through everyday actions, relationships, initiative and responsibility. (2)

Facilitator note

Use participants' own words as the starting point. Avoid introducing a fixed image of what a leader should look or behave like.

ACTIVITY 2 – Women Who Influenced Us

Duration: 20 min

Objective: To help participants recognise different forms of women's leadership and identify qualities that make someone influential, including leadership that is informal or less visible.

Materials:

- Flipchart, markers, pens
- Optional photos or short profiles of diverse women

Step-by-step

Individual reflection - Ask participants to think of one woman who has influenced or inspired them and consider what made her influential. This may be a family member, teacher, friend, activist, community member, public figure or fictional figure. (2 min)

Invite several participants to briefly share who they chose and what made that woman influential. Guide a short group discussion using questions such as:

- What made these women influential or inspiring to you?
- Was their influence formal or informal, visible or less visible?
- Which leadership qualities appeared across the examples?

Encourage participants to notice similarities and differences between the examples and to consider whether all of these women would usually be recognised as leaders. (15 min)

Highlight that women's leadership can be formal or informal, visible or less visible. Influence may come from a formal role, but also from knowledge, trust, lived experience, care, courage, responsibility, persistence, values, empathy, reliability, initiative or the ability to mobilise and create space for others to participate. (3 min)

Facilitator note

If participants find it difficult to think of examples, use a few diverse photos or short profiles as inspiration. Keep the focus on qualities and influence rather than on whether someone has an official leadership title.

ACTIVITY 3 – My Leadership Profile

Duration: 30 min

Objective: To support participants in recognising their own leadership potential through reflection on their values, strengths, ways of acting and areas for growth.

Materials:

- * Worksheet 1A or 1B “My Leadership Profile”
- * Pens, markers

Step-by-step

Introduce the activity through explanation that leadership potential does not mean already having all the skills, always feeling confident or wanting to take a visible role. It can be recognised in values, strengths, experiences and ways of contributing to a group. (3 min)

Participants complete their leadership profile by individual self-reflection (15 min):

- values that matter to me;
- strengths I already have;
- how I usually act or contribute in groups;
- how I support or influence others;
- one area I would like to strengthen.

Participants then exchange in pairs, sharing as much of their profile as they feel comfortable with. If appropriate, invite them to reflect on the question: “*What do I see in you that you may not see in yourself?*” (10 min)

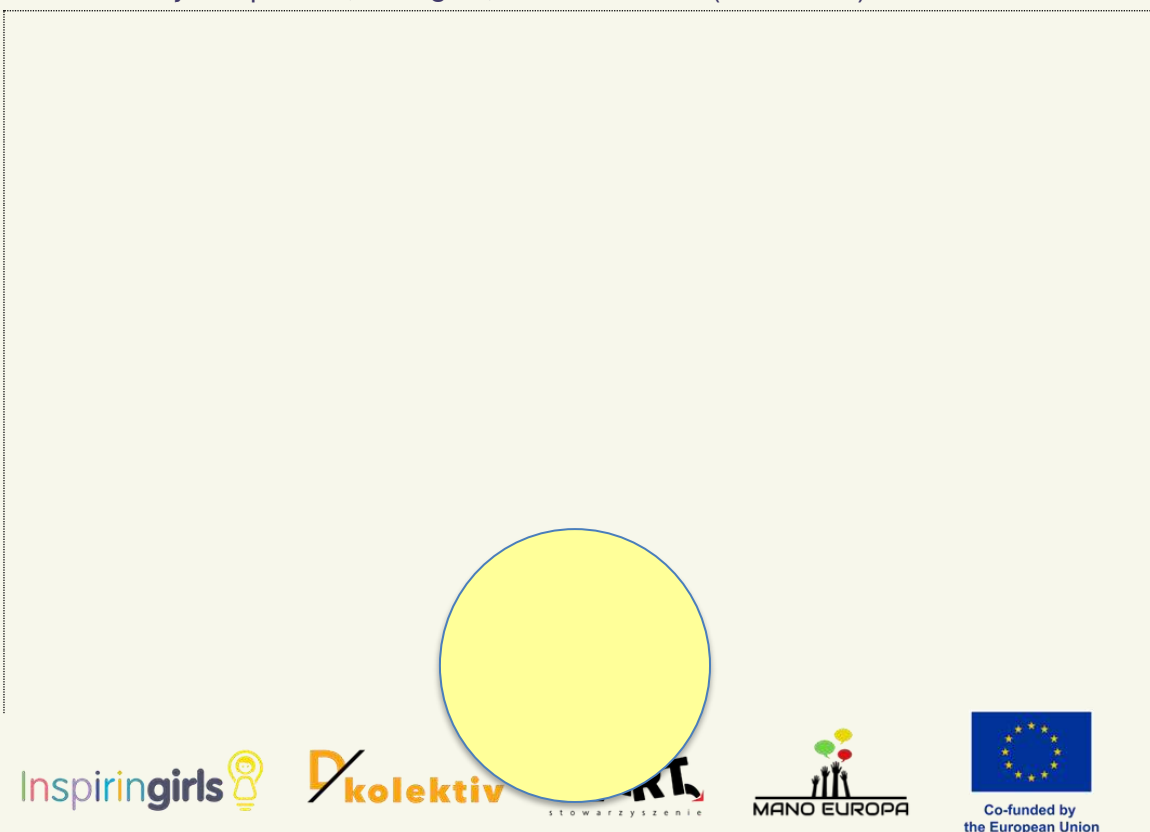
At the end, each participant identifies one leadership quality they would like to use more consciously in school, an organisation, a peer group or their community. (2 min)

Facilitator note

Frame the activity as self-reflection, not self-evaluation. Remind participants that quieter, supportive and less visible ways of contributing can also be forms of leadership. Use either Annex 1A or 1B depending on the group and context.

Annex 1: My Leadership Profile Worksheet - Discovering My Strengths

Instructions: In the center of the paper, draw a circle to represent your Sun. Inside the circle, write your name. Then draw rays spreading out from the circle. On each ray, write one of your qualities, strengths, or core abilities (at least six).



The worksheet provides a large rectangular area for drawing. At the bottom center of this area is a yellow circle with a blue outline, intended to represent the sun. The instructions indicate that participants should write their name inside this circle and draw rays extending outwards to write down their qualities and strengths.

ACTIVITY 4 – Leadership Myths and Gender Expectations

Duration: 20 minutes

Objective: To encourage participants to critically reflect on common assumptions about leadership and how gender expectations may influence who is recognised, encouraged or discouraged from taking leadership roles.

Materials:

- * Open space for an attitude scale
- * Optional signs: “Strongly Agree”, “Not Sure / It Depends”, “Strongly Disagree”

Step-by-step

Introduce the attitude scale - explain that one side of the room represents “Strongly Agree”, the opposite side “Strongly Disagree”, and the middle “Not Sure / It Depends”. Participants position themselves according to their opinion. (2 min)

Read 5-6 statements. After each statement, invite one or two participants from different positions to briefly explain their choice. (8 min)

Possible statements:



- A leader must be confident all the time.
- Supporting others can be a form of leadership.
- Leadership is more about influence than control.
- Girls and boys are equally encouraged to lead.
- Girls are often expected to help, not lead.
- Care and listening are leadership skills.
- Leadership is not only about being loud.
- Girls are judged more when they speak directly.
- Confidence is not enough without support.
- Girls should not have to choose between being liked and being heard.
- Seeing women leaders changes what girls believe is possible.

Guide a group discussion using questions such as (7 min):

- Which assumptions about leadership did we notice?
- Are girls and boys encouraged to show leadership in the same ways?
- Which forms of leadership are often overlooked?

Explain that gender norms can influence how leadership behaviours are recognised and judged. Qualities such as confidence or direct communication may be interpreted differently depending on gender, while care, listening and support are not always recognised as forms of leadership. (3 min)

Facilitator note

This activity is optional and is particularly useful when a stronger connection with the Gender Equality module is needed. The aim is not to reach agreement but to make assumptions visible and encourage reflection. Select statements that fit the age, experience and cultural context of the group.

ACTIVITY 5 – From Reaction to Strategy

Duration: 45 minutes

Objective: To introduce strategic thinking as a way of pausing before reacting, checking assumptions and considering different perspectives before deciding how to respond to situations affecting girls and young women.

Materials:

- * Annex - Strategic Thinking Scenarios
- * Pens
- * Projector or flipchart for the four strategic questions

Step-by-step

Briefly explain that strategic thinking helps us move beyond our first reaction and understand a situation more clearly before deciding how to respond. Emphasise that it

involves pausing, checking what we know and what we may be assuming, and considering different perspectives before acting. (5 min)

Divide participants into small groups and give each group one scenario related to the participation, equality or position of girls and young women.

Explain that the aim is not to solve the situation immediately, but to pause and examine it more carefully using four strategic questions:

- What is our first reaction?
- What is really happening here?
- What do we know, and what are we assuming?
- Who or what could help us understand or respond better?

Groups discuss their scenario using the questions. Encourage them to notice assumptions or unanswered questions, perspectives that may be missing, and information or support that could help them understand the situation more clearly.

Each group prepares one or two key insights to share with the others. (20 min)

In a plenary, invite each group to briefly share what they understood differently after examining the situation more strategically. (15 min)

Use their observations to guide a short joint reflection:

- What changed when we paused before reacting?
- Which assumptions or missing perspectives did we notice?
- What might we need to understand before deciding what change we want to see?

At the end, emphasise that strategic thinking does not mean having an immediate solution. It means creating a clearer and more thoughtful basis for deciding what change is needed, how to respond and how to move forward. (5 min)

Facilitator note

Keep groups focused on understanding the situation rather than developing complete solutions. If they move too quickly to action, ask: “What tells you that?”, “Is this something you know or something you are assuming?” or “Whose perspective might be missing?”.

Annex 2: Strategic Thinking Scenarios

Group 1: Ideas That Are Not Taken Seriously

A group of girls wants to propose a new student initiative at their school. During meetings, teachers and other students often interrupt them, quickly dismiss their suggestions or ask a male student to explain the same idea. The girls are beginning to feel that speaking up is pointless.

Group 2: Who Is Seen as a Leader?

A youth organisation is selecting a young person to lead an important community activity. A girl with relevant experience would like to apply, but some members say that a more confident and outspoken boy would be a “more natural leader.” She starts questioning whether she is ready for the role.

Group 3: Different Expectations

A young woman wants to continue her education in another city. Her family supports education in general, but they are worried that moving away would be unsafe and believe she should stay closer to home. Her brother was previously encouraged to move away for his studies without the same concerns.

Group 4: Participation Without Influence

Several girls are invited to join a local youth council. They attend meetings and are included in photographs and public events, but decisions are usually made before they are asked for their opinion. They feel visible, but they are unsure whether their participation has any real influence.

Group 5: Feeling Safe in Public Spaces

A group of young women would like to participate in evening activities at a local youth centre. However, some of them do not feel safe travelling home after dark, and public transport is limited. The organisers believe the activity is equally accessible to everyone because participation is free and open to all.

Questions for Each Group

- What is your first reaction?
- What is really happening here?
- What do you know, and what are you assuming?
- Who or what could help you understand or respond better?

ACTIVITY 6 – Towards Desired Change

Duration: 60 minutes

Objective: To help participants move from a problem&challenge towards describing a preferred future, identifying signs of progress and existing support, and choosing one realistic direction for further development in the Advocacy module.

Materials:

- * Annex - Towards Desired Change
- * Flipchart paper or large sheets of paper

- * Markers or pens

Step-by-step

Introduce the activity and choose the starting point (5 min)

Explain that participants will work in small groups to explore a change they would like to see in the future regarding the participation, equality or position of girls and young women. They will consider:

- what they would like to see instead of the current situation;
- what could show that change is beginning;
- what strengths and support already exist;
- what realistic direction could be developed further.

Choose one option for the group work:

- Option A - Continue with the scenario from Activity 5

Participants remain in the same small groups and continue working with the scenario they have already explored.

- Option B - Choose a change participants would like to see

In small groups, participants identify a specific change they would like to see regarding the participation, equality or position of girls and young women.

Encourage participants to avoid very broad topics and focus on a change they can describe concretely.

Participants remain in the same small groups throughout **Steps 2–5** and develop their ideas step by step.

2. Preferred future (15 min)

In their small groups, participants describe what they would like to see instead of the current situation.

Use the following guiding questions:

- What would your preferred future look like? What would you like to see instead?
- What would girls and young women be doing or experiencing differently?
- What would other people, groups or institutions be doing differently?

Each group formulates one or two clear sentences describing its preferred future.

3. Signs of progress (10 min)

Groups identify two or three small, realistic and observable signs that would show that the preferred future is beginning to emerge.

Use the following guiding questions:



- What would be the first sign that things are improving?
- What would girls and young women notice? What would girls and young women be doing or experiencing differently?
- What would other people notice? What would people be doing or saying differently?

Encourage groups to focus on signs that could actually be observed rather than broad statements such as “people would be more supportive” or “there would be more equality”.

4. Strengths, resources and support – 10 min

Groups identify what already exists that could support the desired change and create a simple support map. This may include:

- personal or group strengths, knowledge, skills or experience;
- supportive people;
- organisations or institutions;
- spaces and opportunities;
- role models;
- potential allies.

Use the following guiding questions:

- What strengths, knowledge, skills or experience can we build on?
- Who or what could support this change?
- Where are things already working slightly better?
- What could be strengthened or built upon?

The aim is not to conduct a full stakeholder analysis, but to help participants recognise resources and support that already exist.

5. Realistic direction – 10 min

Based on everything they have discussed so far, each group identifies one realistic direction that could be developed further in the Advocacy module.

Use the following guiding questions:

- What direction feels realistic and meaningful to explore further?
- Which part of the preferred future would we most like to work towards?
- What existing strengths or support could we build on?

Remind participants that they are not yet developing a specific activity or action plan. A direction describes an area or pathway for further work. Specific objectives, target groups, decision-makers, messages, tactics and activities will be developed later in the Advocacy module.

6. Group sharing (10 min)

Bring participants back to the plenary. Each group briefly shares:

- its preferred future;
- one-two signs of progress;
- one existing strength and one resource or source of support;

- one realistic direction.

Ask groups to keep their presentations brief and focus only on these four elements.

7. Facilitator synthesis (5 min)

Highlight common themes or patterns that emerged across the groups.

Briefly connect the activity with the overall learning journey of the module:

- Leadership helps us recognise our capacity to influence and contribute.
- Strategic thinking helps us understand situations more clearly and consider different perspectives.
- Defining the change we want to see helps us clarify where we want to go and what we can build on before moving into concrete advocacy planning.

Close by reminding participants that the realistic directions they identified are not yet action plans. They will have the opportunity to develop them further into objectives, target groups, decision-makers, messages and actions in the Advocacy module.

Facilitator note

This activity draws on selected solution-focused principles associated with the work of Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and colleagues (de Shazer et al., 1986). In this module, these principles are adapted for non-formal education and facilitation and are not used as a therapeutic intervention. Strategic thinking helps participants understand where they are by examining the situation, facts, assumptions and different perspectives. The solution-focused approach then helps them explore where they want to go, what is already helping and which realistic directions could move the situation forward.

In practice, the approach means helping participants move from focusing mainly on “What is wrong?” towards questions such as:

- “What would we like to see instead?”
- “What would show us that change is beginning?”
- “What is already helping?”
- “What could be a realistic direction forward?”

Key Steps of the Solution-Focused Pathway

Preferred future: What would participants like to see instead of the current situation, and what would be different in practice?

Signs of progress: What would people see, hear or experience if positive change had started?

Strengths, resources, exceptions and support: What abilities, experiences, relationships, organisations, spaces or opportunities already exist? When or where is the situation already slightly better, and what makes this possible?

Realistic directions: Which one or two directions feel realistic and meaningful for further development in the Advocacy module?

Guide the activity as one continuous process: *challenge* → *preferred future* → *signs of progress* → *strengths and support* → *realistic direction*

Keep the following principles in mind:

- Keep the preferred future concrete and observable. Encourage participants to describe what people would actually be doing, saying or experiencing differently.
- Build on what already exists. Help participants recognise strengths, relationships, opportunities and resources that could support change.
- Distinguish a desired change from an activity. Participants may quickly suggest workshops, campaigns, events or social media activities. Help them first clarify what change these activities would be intended to contribute to.
- Keep the final directions realistic and meaningful, while leaving detailed planning for the Advocacy module. Participants do not yet need to define detailed objectives, target groups, decision-makers, messages, tactics or an action plan.

Example of the full process

The following example can help trainers understand how the different steps connect. It does not need to be presented to participants unless they need additional clarification.

Problem / Challenge: “Girls are rarely involved in important decisions in the student council.”

Preferred future: “Girls actively contribute to student council decisions, their proposals are taken seriously, and they have meaningful opportunities to take leadership roles.”

Signs of progress

- More girls speak during student council meetings.
- Girls’ proposals are included on meeting agendas.
- At least one proposal raised by girls is discussed by the council.

Existing strengths, resources and support

- Girls who are already interested in participating.
- A supportive teacher.

- Student council members who are open to change.
- A local youth organisation with experience in youth participation.

Realistic direction: “Strengthening girls’ participation and voice in student council decision-making.” This direction can later be developed in the Advocacy module into concrete objectives, decision-makers, messages, tactics and actions.

Annex 3: Towards Desired Change Worksheet

Instruction: this worksheet is a solution-focus framework that can help you more easily define your desired future, identify existing resources, and determine a realistic next step.

The Change We Want to See

What would you like to see as a change instead of the current situation? What would be different for girls in practice?

Signs of Progress

What would people see, hear, or experience if positive change had already started?

Where We Are Now

On a scale from 0 to 10, where are we now? What is already present, and what would one point higher look like?

Strengths, Resources & Support

What strengths, resources, allies, or examples of previous progress can we build on?

Our First Realistic Step

What small, realistic step can we take next? Who needs to be involved or support us?

CLOSING REFLECTION

Duration: 15 min

Objective: To consolidate learning across the module and help participants identify one insight or direction they want to carry into the next stage.

Materials:

- * Paper and pens

Step-by-step

Ask participants to choose one or two of the questions below and spend a few minutes reflecting on their thoughts and experiences individually.

One thing I recognised about myself is...

- One thing I now understand differently is...
- One change or direction I would like to explore further is...
- One source of support I now see more clearly is...

After that, invite them to share one reflection in a plenary or in a pair (depend on time and the group cohesion).

At the end, each participant shares one word describing what they are taking from the module.

Finally, briefly connect the module with the next step/module developing selected directions into more concrete advocacy goals and actions.

Share the link to the evaluation form.

Facilitator note

Keep the reflection low-pressure; sharing is optional.

MODULE 4 - Advocacy & Action Development

Duration of the whole module (minutes): 180 minutes (3 hours)

1. Key Concepts and Topics

Module 4 introduces advocacy as a distinct form of civic action that moves beyond raising awareness or voicing an opinion, and instead works strategically to reach the people who actually hold the power to make a decision. The first activity is focusing on effective advocacy actions by presenting examples. Participants analysing short case studies relevant to young women, the module maps out four accessible entry points into advocacy:

- grassroots advocacy,
- digital advocacy,
- lobbying,
- campaigning.

In this module participants have a chance to examine what distinguishes advocacy from activism and awareness-raising: a clear target, a defined ask, and a concrete outcome to work toward.

A second activity is stakeholder mapping - identifying who actually holds decision-making power over an issue, and distinguishing this from who simply cares about it. Using a simple influence/interest grid (*Stakeholder Mapping Tool*), participants learn to place decision-makers and institutions across three levels:

- 1) **local** (school or university administration, municipal councils, youth centres, local NGOs and women's associations),
- 2) **national** (members of parliament, national youth councils, gender-equality organisations, relevant government ministries),
- 3) **European** (Members of the European Parliament, the European Youth Forum, the European Commission, EU-level NGO networks).

This mapping equips participants to direct their advocacy toward the actors most able to act, rather than spreading their energy toward anyone who is simply sympathetic to the cause.

The module's most important practical concept is **advocacy action planning**: transforming an issue into a structured plan built around **five elements**:

- 1) a specific and realistic goal,
- 2) a clearly identified target audience or decision-maker,
- 3) a key message explaining why they should act,
- 4) a set of tactics for reaching them (petition, meeting, social media, event),
- 5) a timeline sequencing what happens first, second and third.

Working in small groups, participants apply this structure directly to a self-chosen issue using an Advocacy Action Plan Canvas, and define a success indicator that will let them recognise whether their action worked.

Closely linked to action planning is persuasive communication: how to structure a message so that it moves an audience to act, rather than simply informing them. Participants explore how combining storytelling with evidence makes a case more compelling than either alone, and are introduced to a simple dramatic structure - adapted from Freytag's Pyramid - for shaping a short, two-minute pitch that builds toward a clear ask.

Underneath all of these concepts is a **horizontal theme: confidence, empowerment and resilience**. This module presents advocacy not only as a technical skill. It highlights to participants that they have the right to speak up about issues they care about. Participants can practise using their public voice in a supportive small-group setting before addressing decision-makers. They also see themselves as part of a wider European community of young women taking their first steps as change-makers.

2. Specific objectives

-  Enhance participants knowledge of understanding the advocacy - its definition, its distinction from activism and awareness-raising, and its main forms (grassroots, digital, lobbying, campaigning) - and of the decision-makers and institutions they can engage at local, national and European level.
-  Equip participants with the tools to design a structured advocacy action plan for a self-chosen issue - goal, target audience, key message, tactics and timeline - and to pitch it persuasively by combining storytelling with facts.
-  Build participants' confidence to speak up, take action, and see themselves as part of a European community of young women change-makers.

3. Learning Outcomes

KNOWLEDGE

- * Understanding of advocacy and its distinction from activism and awareness-raising, including knowledge of key types of advocacy (grassroots, digital, lobbying and campaigning) and relevant decision-makers and policy channels at local, national and European levels.
- * Knowledge of new tools and approaches for effective advocacy (*Stakeholder Mapping, Advocacy Action Plan Canvas, Freytag's Pyramid*).

SKILLS

- * Knowledge of how to develop a structured advocacy action plan, including setting goals, identifying target audiences, developing messages, selecting tactics, defining timelines and success indicators.
- * Understanding of how to tailor persuasive pitches to specific audiences and use storytelling to build compelling cases for change, as well as provide constructive feedback on advocacy messages.

ATTITUDES

- * Confidence and a sense of legitimacy in voicing one's views and taking public action on issues one cares about.
- * Sense of ownership over self-identified issues, treating advocacy as personal and within reach rather than abstract or reserved for others.
- * Openness to giving and receiving honest peer feedback, including valuing critique as a way to sharpen one's voice rather than as personal criticism.
- * Sense of belonging to a wider, cross-border community of young women change-makers, including recognition of one's own action.

4. Link to other modules:

Module 4 is the final module of the programme. It builds directly on **Module 1** (Gender Equality & Women's Rights) for framing advocacy issues through a gender lens, **Module 2** (Civic Participation & Political Literacy) for understanding policy channels, and **Module 3** (Leadership & Strategic Thinking) for goal-setting and decision-maker analysis.

The action plans developed in this module are directly connected with the project's further activities: youth-policy meetings, awareness-raising campaigns, and the European Forum in Portugal.



5. Module activities overview:

ACTIVITY	DURATION	METHOD
Icebreaker – Take a Stand	10 minutes	Movement / spectrum exercise.
Activity 1 - What Makes Advocacy Work?	30 minutes	Input + case study analysis.
Activity 2 - Who Holds the Power?	25 minutes	Stakeholder mapping.
Activity 3 - Issues That Matter to Us	25 minutes	Rotating pair discussions (issue speed-sharing).
Activity 4 - Building the Advocacy Action Plan	40 minutes	Design thinking / canvas work.
Activity 5 - Pitch It!	40 minutes	Pitch session + peer feedback.
Closing Reflection	10 minutes	Individual reflection + closing circle.
TOTAL	180 minutes (3 hours)	

ICEBREAKER – Take a Stand

Duration: 10 minutes

Objective: To energise the group, surface participants' existing opinions on civic and gender-related issues, and ease everyone into an advocacy mindset before the module content begins.

Materials:

- * Open space large enough for participants to move
- * Two signs or flipchart pages reading "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" placed on opposite walls
- * A prepared list of 5-6 statements (see facilitator note)

Step-by-step

Clear a space in the room and post the two signs on opposite walls, with an imaginary line connecting them. Explain the exercise: you will read a statement, and participants position themselves along the line based on how much they agree or disagree - no talking while moving. (2 min)

Read the first statement aloud. Give participants 15–20 seconds to find their position on the line. (1 min per statement)

Once everyone has moved, invite one or two volunteers from different points on the line to briefly explain their position (30 seconds each, no debate or rebuttals - just listening).

Repeat steps 2–3 for all 5-6 statements (approx. 6 min total).

Close with a bridging line connecting the exercise to the module: e.g. "You all just took a stand — that's the first step of advocacy. Today we'll turn that into action." (1 min)

Facilitator note

Adapt the statements to the cultural context of the group. Suggested statements: "Young women are equally represented in politics in my country"; "Social media is an effective tool for creating real change"; "One person can make a real difference on a big issue"; "It's easy to know who to contact when you want to change something in your community." Keep the tone light and curious, not confrontational - the goal is energising the room, not resolving the debate.

ACTIVITY 1 – What Makes Advocacy Work?

Duration: 30 minutes

Objective: To build a shared understanding of what advocacy is (and how it differs from activism and awareness-raising), and to identify what makes an advocacy effort effective, through analysis of real-style examples.

Materials:

- * Annex 1 (Case Study Cards, one per small group)
- * Flipchart paper and markers
- * Projector/screen for facilitator input

Step-by-step

Using [slides](#) provided introduce the definition of advocacy; how it differs from activism and awareness-raising; and the main types - grassroots, digital, lobbying, and campaigning. (5 min)

Divide participants into small groups of 3–4. (1 min)

Give each group one case study card from **Annex 1**. Ask them to read it together and discuss the guiding questions printed on the card (12 min):

- ✓ What was the goal?
- ✓ Who was the target audience or decision-maker?
- ✓ What tactics were used?
- ✓ What made it effective?

Bring the group back together. Ask each small group to share one or two key insights from their case (roughly 2 minutes per group). (8 min)

Synthesise the shared success factors on a flipchart, grouping similar points as they come up (e.g. "clear target", "specific ask", "used evidence and stories"). Keep this visible - it will be referenced again in Activity 4. (4 min)

Facilitator note

*Prepare enough copies of Annex 1 so each group gets one card (there are three cases - duplicate cards across groups if you have more than three groups). If groups finish early, ask them to also note anything that seemed to **not** work in their case.*

Annex 1: Case Study Cards (for Activity 1)



Case A - The Safer Commute Campaign

A group of young women in a mid-sized city noticed frequent harassment on public buses after dark. They started a digital petition paired with short video testimonials shared on social media, and collected over 4,000 signatures in three weeks. They used the momentum to request a meeting with the city's transport authority, presenting the petition alongside a short list of concrete asks (better lighting at stops, a visible reporting hotline). The transport authority agreed to pilot two of the three requested changes within six months.

Guiding questions: What was the goal? Who was the target decision-maker? What tactics were used? What made this effective?



Case B - The Youth Policy Roundtable

A national youth network wanted young people included in decisions about a new civic education curriculum. Rather than public campaigning, they focused on direct engagement: researching the policy process, identifying the three officials responsible for the decision, and requesting a formal roundtable meeting. They prepared a short position paper with concrete recommendations backed by data from their own survey of 500 young people. Two of their five recommendations were incorporated into the final curriculum.

Guiding questions: What was the goal? Who was the target decision-maker? What tactics were used? What made this effective?



Case C - Access to Menstrual Products in Schools

Students at a local school noticed that a lack of free menstrual products was causing some girls to miss class. A small group gathered signed statements from classmates and presented them at a school board meeting, alongside a simple cost estimate for stocking dispensers in restrooms. They framed the issue around attendance and equal opportunity rather than only health, which resonated with board members focused on academic outcomes. The board approved a small budget line for a one-year pilot.

Guiding questions: What was the goal? Who was the target decision-maker? What tactics were used? What made this effective?



ACTIVITY 2 – Who Holds the Power?

Duration: 25 minutes

Objective: To introduce stakeholder mapping and help participants identify the decision-makers and institutions relevant to an advocacy issue, distinguishing between levels of interest and influence.

Materials:

- * Annex 2 (Stakeholder Mapping Tool, one per group, enlarged to flipchart size if possible)
- * Sticky notes (at least 15 per group)
- * Markers

Step-by-step

Briefly explain the Stakeholder Mapping Tool (Annex 2): a grid with "Influence" on one axis and "Interest" on the other, used to identify who needs to be convinced, informed, or mobilised. (5 min)

In the same small groups, ask participants to brainstorm all the people, institutions, or groups connected to a shared example issue (e.g. "youth political participation in our community") - one stakeholder per sticky note. (5 min)

Groups place their sticky notes onto the Annex 2 grid, discussing as they go where each stakeholder belongs (high/low influence, high/low interest). (10 min)

Ask one group to briefly present their map to the room; invite quick comparisons from the others ("did anyone place a stakeholder very differently?"). (5 min)

Example stakeholders (for step 2)

If groups get stuck brainstorming, the facilitator can prompt with examples across levels - participants should still be encouraged to name others specific to their own context:

- ✓ Local: school or university administration, local council members or mayor's office, youth centre staff, local NGOs and women's associations, community and religious leaders, local media/radio
- ✓ National: members of parliament, national youth council, national women's rights or gender-equality organisations, relevant government ministries (e.g. education, gender equality, youth), national media outlets, political party youth wings
- ✓ European: Members of the European Parliament, European Youth Forum, European Commission (relevant Directorate-General), EU-level NGO networks, European media

- ✓ Other: parents' associations, peers/fellow students, social media influencers, local businesses affected by the issue.

Facilitator note

Circulate actively during step 3 - groups often confuse "interest" (how much a stakeholder cares) with "influence" (how much power they have to act). Use a single shared example issue for this activity so every group can engage with it immediately; participants will apply the tool to their own chosen issue later, in Activity 4.

Annex 2: Stakeholder Mapping Tool (for Activity 2)

Instructions: Write each stakeholder on a separate sticky note. As a group, place each note onto the grid below based on how much influence that stakeholder has over the issue (vertical axis) and how much interest or stake they have in it (horizontal axis).

	LOW INTEREST	HIGH INTEREST
HIGH INFLUENCE		
LOW INFLUENCE		

Annex 2.1: Example of filled Stakeholder Mapping Tool (for Activity 2)

Below is an **example of filled Stakeholder Mapping Tool**. The facilitator can use it as a reference before the activity, if the group is stuck the facilitator can help participants by suggesting a few examples.

	LOW INTEREST	HIGH INTEREST
HIGH INFLUENCE	1) Mayor's office / local council 2) School or university administration 3) Relevant government ministry	1) Local youth centre / youth council 2) Member of Parliament for the region 3) National Youth Council
LOW INFLUENCE	1) Local NGOs and women's associations 2) Peers and fellow students 3) Youth wings of political parties	1) Local media / radio 2) Local businesses 3) Parents' associations (not yet engaged)

ACTIVITY 3 – Issues That Matter to Us

Duration: 25 minutes

Objective: To surface the issues participants care most about across different countries and backgrounds, build a sense of shared purpose, and generate a pool of potential issues for the action plans developed in Activity 4.

Materials:

- * Annex 3 (Issue Speed-Sharing prompt card)
- * A blank wall or flipchart space labelled "Issues Wall"
- * Sticky notes and a marker for each participant
- * A bell/timer for rotations

Step-by-step

Explain the format: participants will have three short 1:1 conversations, each with a different partner, discussing the prompt (i.e. question) on Annex 3. When the bell rings, they thank their partner and move to someone new. (2 min)

Round 1: pairs discuss the prompt. (4 min)

Signal the rotation and run Round 2 with a new partner. (4 min)

Signal the rotation and run Round 3 with a new partner. (4 min)

Individually, each participant writes their single most compelling issue - their own or one they heard - on a sticky note and posts it to the Issues Wall. (4 min)

The facilitator quickly clusters the sticky notes into 3–4 recurring themes on the wall and reads them aloud to the room. (7 min)

Facilitator note

This rotating pair format gets everyone talking directly to several different people in a short time, which works well for a group that has just done sit-down work in Activity 2. Keep rotations brisk - a bell, clap, or visible timer helps. If numbers are odd, allow one group of three per round. The clustered Issues Wall becomes the pool of issues participants choose from in Activity 4, so keep it visible for the rest of the session.

Annex 3: Issue Speed-Sharing Prompt Card (for Activity 3)

Discussion prompt - use the same prompt for all three rounds:

"What's one issue affecting young women in your country or community that you wish more people understood - something that frustrates you or that you want to see change?"

Instructions for participants: Find a new partner for each round. You have about 3–4 minutes to share your issue and listen to theirs. When the bell rings, thank your partner and move on to someone new. Make sure that it is a two-way conversation where each participant can practise time management while speaking and listening.

After the three rounds: write your single most compelling issue - your own, or one you heard from a partner - on a sticky note, and add it to the Issues Wall.

Each note = one issue from a speed-sharing conversation. The facilitator groups notes into themes as they come in.



These clustered themes carry forward into Activity 4, where groups pick one issue to build their action plan around.

ACTIVITY 4 – Building the Advocacy Action Plan

Duration: 40 minutes

Objective: To design a structured, realistic mini advocacy action plan on an issue identified in the Activity 3 of the Module 4 (or a self-chosen issue), applying the concepts of target audience, key message, tactics and timeline.

Materials:

- * Annex 4 (Advocacy Action Plan Canvas, one per group)
- * Pens
- * The success-factors flipchart from Activity 1
- * The Issues Wall from Activity 3
- * *Annex 2 (from Activity 2) for groups working on a related issue (optional)*

Step-by-step

Walk through the Action Plan Canvas section by section: The Problem, Goal, Target audience / decision-maker, Key message, Tactics, and Timeline. Give one quick example for each section. (7 min)

In their small groups of 4–5, ask participants to choose one issue (local, national, personal level) - either from the Issues Wall themes or one of their own - that they want to build a mini campaign around. (3 min)

Groups complete the Annex 4 canvas together. The facilitator circulates, offering support and prompting questions to groups that get stuck. (25 min)

Groups do a quick peer check-in: each group briefly shares their draft canvas with one neighbouring group and gets one piece of feedback before finalising. (5 min)

Facilitator note

Encourage groups toward specific, realistic, achievable goals rather than broad statements ("more youth in politics" → "a youth seat on the district council by next year"). If a group is stuck, prompt with: "Who specifically needs to hear this?" or "What's the smallest first step you could take this month?".

Annex 4: Advocacy Action Plan Canvas (for Activity 4)

Complete each section as a group. Keep answers short and specific.

Problem	<i>Write here the problem statement.</i>
Goal	<i>What specific change do you want to see? (be concrete and realistic for a first step)</i>
Target audience / decision-maker	<i>Who has the power to make this change happen?</i>
Key message	<i>In one or two sentences, why should they act?</i>
Tactics	<i>How will you reach them? (e.g. petition, meeting, social media, event, something else?)</i>
Timeline	<i>What happens first, second, third? Over what period?</i>
Success indicator	<i>How will you know if it worked?</i>

ACTIVITY 5 – Pitch It!

Duration: 40 minutes

Objective: To practise persuasive public communication, give and receive structured peer feedback, and build confidence in presenting an advocacy idea publicly.

Materials:

- * Annex 5 (Pitch Preparation Template)
- * Annex 5.1 (Peer Feedback Frame, one per participant)
- * Completed Action Plan Canvases from Activity 4
- * A visible timer
- * Projector/screen for facilitator input

Step-by-step

Give a short input (using **slides for Activity 5**) on persuasive pitch structure and introduce participants with the Freytag's Pyramid, also known as Freytag's dramatic structure. (10 min)

Groups (the same as in the Activity 4) prepare a 2-minute pitch of their action plan based on their canvas. Each group received a printed version of Annex 5. (15 min)

Run the pitch round: each group presents for 2 minutes, followed by 2 minutes of structured feedback from the rest of the room using the Annex 5.1 frame. Repeat for each group. (20 minutes - roughly 4 minutes per group, total 4 or 5 groups if the Module is implemented with 20 participants)

Close with a short facilitator wrap-up, connecting the pitches to the project's real next steps (e.g. youth-policy meetings, awareness campaigns, the European Forum). (5 min)

Facilitator note

Total pitch-round time depends on the number of groups (≈4 minutes each including feedback) - adjust the number of pitching groups or the per-group time slightly if needed to stay within the 40-minute block. Keep feedback strictly to the Annex 5 frame to avoid it turning into open debate about the issue itself.

Annex 5: Pitch Preparation Template (for Activity 5)

Use this template together with your completed Advocacy Action Plan Canvas (Activity 4) to prepare your group's 2-minute pitch. Freytag's Pyramid gives your pitch a shape that builds toward your ask and ends on a clear call to action.

Group members:

Our issue / campaign:

YOUR PITCH, IN FIVE PARTS

1. Exposition ~20 sec

Grab attention. In one or two lines, introduce the issue and why it matters, right now, to this audience.

Draws on: your issue + Goal

2. Rising Action ~30 sec

Build the case. Use a short story or real example, plus one piece of evidence, to show why this matters.

Draws on: your Key message

3. Climax ~20 sec

State your specific, concrete idea - clearly and directly - aimed at the people who can act on it.

Draws on: your Goal + Target audience / decision-maker

4. Fallin Action ~30 sec

Show it's realistic. Briefly explain how you'll reach them and what happens first, second, third.

Draws on: your Tactics + Timeline

5. Resolution ~20 sec

End with the change you want to see and how you'll know it worked. Leave them with one memorable line.

Draws on: your Success indicator

Total pitch time: 2 minutes

Annex 5.1: Peer Feedback Frame (for Activity 5)

After each pitch, give feedback for other group using this simple frame (spoken or written):

I liked... (one specific strength of the pitch or plan)

I wonder... (one honest question or open point)

One suggestion... (one concrete idea to strengthen the plan)

Keep feedback focused on the pitch and plan, not a debate about the issue itself.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Duration: 10 minutes

Objective: To help participants consolidate what they've learned across the module and leave with one concrete, personal commitment.

Materials:

- * Annex 6 (Reflection prompt card) or the prompt written on a flipchart
- * Paper/pens for each participant

Step-by-step

Individual silent reflection: participants write a short answer to the prompt **"One step I can take as an advocate this month."** (4 min)

Optional pair-share: participants turn to one neighbour and briefly share what they wrote. (2 min)

Closing circle: going around the room, each participant says one word describing how they feel after the module. (3 min)

Facilitator closes the session, thanking the group and briefly previewing the next steps of the programme. (1 min)

Facilitator note

Keep this low-pressure - the written reflection is personal and does not need to be collected or shared beyond the optional pair-share. The one-word check-out is a quick energy read for the facilitator, not a discussion.

Annex 6: Reflection Prompt Card (for Closing Reflection)

Take a few quiet minutes to answer:

- 1) What is one idea from today that surprised you or stuck with you?
- 2) What is one step you can take as an advocate this month?
- 3) Who is one person you could talk to about it?

GIRLS IN DEMOCRACY

Educational programme for young women

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