Digital Active Citizenship in the context of Folk High Schools (PROMOCITI)

An Erasmus+ Project

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Introduction

The world has arrived in the digital revolution and the so-called digitalization touches many aspects of life. Active Citizenship is no exception. Digitalization brings forth a multitude of new opportunities for Active Citizenship. Many questions arise in connection to this development:

- **What is Digital Active Citizenship?**

- **What can it look like?**

- **Where to draw a line between Digital Active Citizenship and private action?**

- **Can there be real empowerment on the internet?**

- **In what way does using digital tools and platforms matter?**

- **Which civic groups benefit from digitalization, opening up new opportunties for Active Citizenship?**

- **What skills are needed to be a digital active citizen and how can Folk High Schools contribute to that?**

- **What is the situation in Folk High Schools regarding Digital Active Citizenship and what possibilities and challenges come with it?**

- **What are the cons and dangers of Digital Active Citizenship? Which regulations are needed to face them?**

This paper aims to give answers to these questions, and support adult education institutions on their way to Digital Active Citizenship.
Enjoy reading!

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Active Citizenship in a digitale age

Definition of „Active Citizenship"

"Active Citizenship" is a broad concept that includes a wide range of meanings and actions.

A simple and short definition is given by the Center for Civic Education in California:

"Active citizenship means getting involved in the life of your community and nation so that you can help determine the country's future."

A more profound definition is given by Bryony Hoskins from the University of Southampton, UK (2014):

"(Active citizenship) is frequently used to describe citizens that engage in a broad range of activities that promote and sustain democracy. These actions include civil society activities such as protesting and collecting petitions, community activities such as volunteering, and conventional political engagement such as voting or campaigning for elections. In addition to participation, there is a normative value element to active citizenship. Active citizenship usually refers to participation that requires respect for others and that does not contravene human rights and democracy. This additional element is used to highlight that participation per se can lead to or be a part of nondemocratic activities that can create harm to certain social groups."

Finally, the PROMOCITI-Team defined its own understanding of Active Citizenship:

„We adhere to the principle of participatory democracy as a development of representative democracy and Active Citizenship as an intrinsic part of this development.

We see democracy not only as freedom from oppression, but also the possibility to participate. We understand Active Citizenship as the will and the capacity to take active part in shaping society together with others. Local, national and international social movements are foundations and laboratories for Active Citizenship.

We see the development of various forms of economic democracy as a way of strengthening civil society and therethrough the foundations for Active Citizenship."

Definition of „Digital"

As summarised by Birgit Aschemann and Chiara Russ-Baumann (2022), there are four main meanings to the word "digital" as defined by the „Digital Dictionary of the German Language".

Those are:

- Performed with the finger (in medicine)
- Not real, virtual, simulated by a computer or on the Internet
- Without a dial or scale, showing only a number
- Based on the conversion of signals into sequences of binary characters

Digital data is information that is expressed in a binary manner – hence it is zeros and ones. The usage of the internet is therefore no obligatory characteristic for being digital – it is an option though. When referring solely to the internet, the term "online" should therefore be used to avoid confusion.

Definition of „Digital Active Citizenship"

The world has arrived in the digital revolution and the so-called digitalization touches many aspects of life. Active Citizenship is no exception.

Since the PROMOCITI team formulated its own definition of "Active Citizenship", a definition of the term "Digital Active Citizenship" was formulated as well.

The way to our defintion

Establishing a clear distinction between Digital Active Citizenship (DAC) and personal digital activities is not always easy. Therefore, the project team decided to **involve the participants of the PROMOCITI Train-the-Trainer modules into the definition finding process.**

Those 15 people were pedagoges from five European countries experienced in the field of adult education and Active Citizenship. An experimental game was conducted in which those 15 persons were presented with various statements. They were then required to indicate on a scale, ranging from 0 % to 100 %, to which extend they perceived these statements as examples of Digital Active Citizenship.

While scenarios like voting online, starting an online petition for the protection of bees or creating a Facebook group for people with disabilities to exchange ideas, were clearly identified as DAC, other scenarios were less clear.

Sharing information on racism via social media as a private person, convincing friends in a private chat to join a political party, attending online live streams about Active Citizenship or privately reading posts about feminism were harder to classify and opinions were divided.

In refining the description of Digital Active Citizenship, another group work (small group discussions) involving participants ultimately pinpointed the following key characteristics:
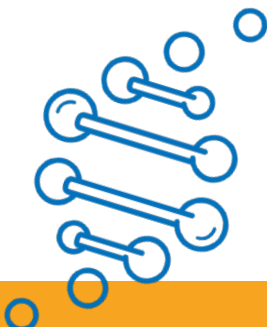
Digital Active Citizenship is …

• … based on human rights and democracy

• … needs to involve action, participation and engagement (doing something for and with people)

• … involves sharing knowledge and critical thinking

• … is open. Humans are interacting with each other

• … requires access to the digital world (e.g. networks, resources)

• … is more than Active Citizenship done solely online: Influence, initiation and support online AND offline

• … requires digital knowledge and skills (e.g. How to use the internet responsibly)

• There are different levels of Online Active Citizenship e.g. reading, posting, sharing, programming, collaborating, starting movements (e.g. #metoo)

We may therefore define Digital Active Citizens as follows:

Digital active citizens have the knowledge and skills to responsibly use and work with digital tools, both online and offline, to perform civic action, participation and engagement in order to make a difference in society. Their actions are based on the values of human rights and democratic principles.

The concept description of Frau-Meigs et al (2017) in EEPN (2020) is a valuable addition to our definition. In there, Digital Citizenship is defined as:

• The ability to engage competently and positively with digital technologies (creating, working, sharing, socializing, investigating, playing, communicating and learning)

• Participating actively and responsibly (values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding) in communities (local, national, global) at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural and intercultural);

• Being involved in a double process of life-long learning (in formal, informal and non-formal settings); and seamlessly defending human rights and dignity (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p. 11–12).

Types of „Digital Active Citizenship"

In this section, an overview of different forms of Digital Active Citizenship is provided. These can generally be classified as follows:

ACTIONS OF DIGITAL ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP CAN BE CLASSIFIED AS:

• From analogue to digital

• Pure digital actions

THEY CAN FURTHER BE CLASSIFIED AS:

• Formal / Top down / Public

• Informal

• Bottom up / Community-based

It's noteworthy that while in the past individuals contributed money and/or time to Active Citizenship activities, in the digital age, they can also contribute data.

From analogue to digital

The main tasks in Active Citizenship did not change over the years: communicating, planning, organizing, funding, campaigning, voting – all these are still necessary tasks.
However, the way, and often also the speed with which these activities are done have changed. Actions that were previously carried out in an analogue manner are now done by using digital and/or online tools.

Examples:
- Register to vote or voting online
- Communication via E-Mail or chat services
- Creating and designing documents in soft-ware programmes
- Sharing documents on platforms and clouds
- Donating money online to AC activities
- Organizing or joining a protest online
- Signing a petition/Gathering signatures for ballot initiatives online
- Researching and sharing information online
- Raising funds on crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter or Indiegogo
- Spreading Active Citizenship news online

Pure digital actions

Pure digital actions derived from the digital world. They would not be existent without it.

Examples:
- *Digital/virtual volunteering,* e.g. a person voluntarily operates the Social Media account of an NGO or does software work
- Creating an *open source software* for everyone to use
- *Crisis Mapping:*
  An open source mapping software is used to collect and display data during a crisis like a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. Instead of volunteering with time or money, people volunteer with their data. Similarly, some Social Media Providers offer the possibility to mark oneself as being "safe" after a disaster.
- *Civic Mapping:*
  e.g. Mapping civic education in Europe https://mapping.thecivics.eu
- *Connecting people and actions* globally via platforms e.g. https://ioby.org/ or https://www.volunteermatch.org/, where civic actions and volunteers are brought together
- Adding (valuable, true) content to a wiki page or contributing to a blog.
  Example: The Wikimedia Foundation, known for Wikipedia, aims to empower and engage people globally by collecting and sharing knowledge. It promotes digital

literacy and access to information. https://www.wikipedia.org/ is a free online encyclopaedia, where users can create, edit and update articles about all kinds of topics.

- Reporting and actively speaking against hate and cyber bullying and/or working for **human rights in the digital space**, like https://hateaid.org or https://iamhereinternational.com Both are Non-Profit Organizations that promote human rights in the digital space. They help to stand up against digital violence and take measures to raise awareness for hate speech. Further examples are:

Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF):
The EFF is a nonprofit organisation focuses on defending civil liberties in the digital world. They work to ensure that individuals have the rights to privacy, free expression, and innovation online.

Global Voices:
Global Voices is a global citizen media network that amplifies the voices of people in different parts of the world. They focus on online free expression and digital activism.

- **Engagement for privacy, data protection, rights and regulations** when using the internet or Artificial Intelligence. Several organisations are dealing with framework conditions of the digital sphere, because the right use of the internet is crucial for democracy. Here are some examples:

Access Now:
Access Now is a global organisation that defends and extends digital rights of users at risk. They work on issues related to internet shutdowns, digital security, and online freedom of expression.

NOYB
Stands for "None of your business" and is a Non-Profit Organisation dedicated to the enforcement of data protection within the European Union. The organization also helps individuals to fight for their privacy rights by submitting cases to courts and launching media campaigns.

D-64
This Non-Profit Organization is working for more freedom, justice and solidarity in the digital world.

The Chaos Computer Club
The largest European hacker association engages in activities like technical research, campaigns, policy advice, publications and the operation of anonymization services and communication tools.

- **Social movements & Hashtag activism**
Hashtag activism like #MeToo have gained momentum and raised awareness through online activism. Particularly in the recent past, new information and communication structures have provided an ideal platform for so-called new social movements to gain attention for certain social and political values and goals and to network with supporting activists and organisations worldwide.
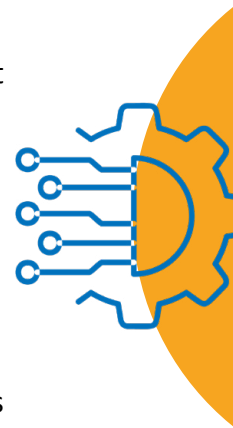
Formal / Top Down / Public

These activities are **initiated by formal authorities** and have an official character.

Example: Register to vote, tax information platforms etc.

Informal

Usually also initiated by formal authorities or policy makers. However, instead of a formal activity, this is more about an **informal exchange of ideas between policy makers and/or authorities and citizens.** The activities are more flexible, open and non-binding.

Example: Discussion with the municipality about the re-design of the city center.

Bottom-up / Community based

Civic activities that are **initiated by the citizens themselves** and do not necessarily include the contribution of formal authorities, even though a cooperation might happen. These types of activities are also called **"Grass-roots Movements".**

Example: Setting up an internet portal for volunteers or a knowledge contribution platform like Wikipedia

Importance of digital skills for active citizens

According to Eurostat, 54 % of adult EU citizens aged 16-74 possessed "basic digital skills" in 2021. This number varies a lot between countries. While e.g. in the Netherlands and Finland the number peaks at 79 %, Bulgaria and Romania showed the lowest results with 31 % and 28 % respectively.

The term "basic digital skills" derived from the so-called Digital Competence Framework for Citizens called "DigComp", implemented in 2010 by the European Commission. The idea of DigComp is to provide a common definition of the term "digital competence" and distinguishes between five key competence areas made up of 21 specific competences (see Figure 1).

Having "basic digital skills" means knowing how to do at least one activity out of each key area. The goal of the European Commission is that at least 80 % of EU citizens possess basic digital skills by 2030.

Information & data literacy
1.1 Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content
1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content
1.3 Managing data, information and digital content

Communication & Collaboration
2.1 Interaction through digital technologies
2.2 Sharing information and content through digital technologies
2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
2.5 Netiquette
2.6 Managing digital identity

Digital content creation
3.1 Developing digital content
3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content
3.3 Copyright and licences
3.4 Programming

Safety
4.1 Protecting devices
4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy
4.3 Protecting health and well-being
4.4 Protecting the environment

Problem solving
5.1 Solving technical problems
5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses
5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
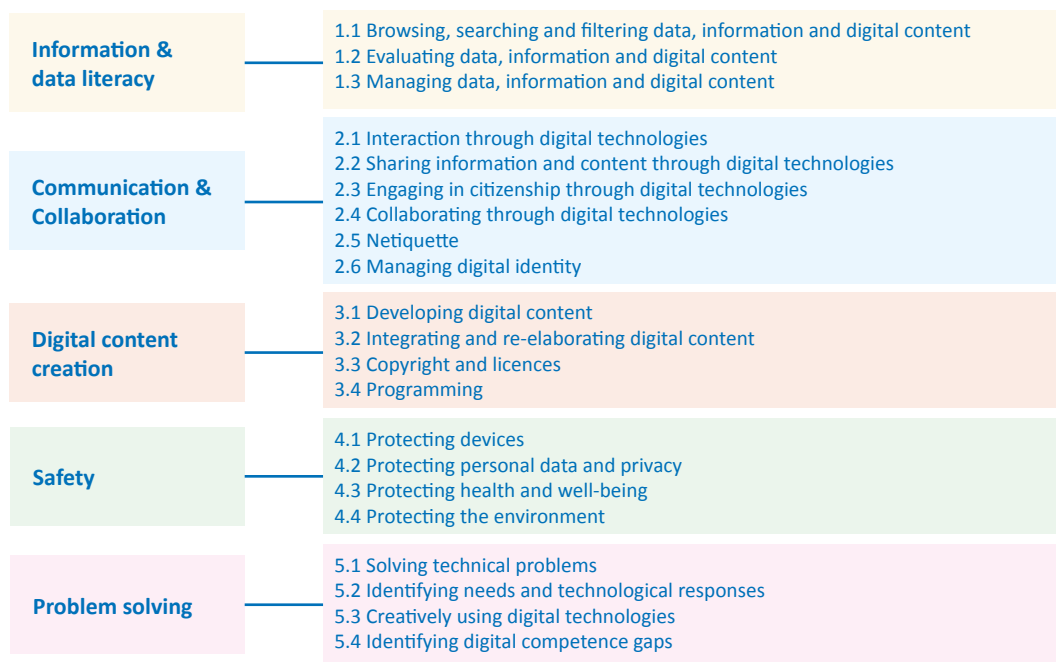5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps

Fig.1: DigComp by the European Commission

Nowadays, digitalisation is influencing nearly every part of our lives. The necessity of having digital skills was impressively demonstrated to the world during the Covid-19 periode: Having digital knowledge was crucial to stay connected with family, friends, clients etc. The world of work was obliged to set up telework possibilities. Governmental services had to be offered online. The examples are manyfold. Technological development is happening at unprecedented speed. Latest developments in Artificial Intelligence, Virtual and Augmented Reality, robotisation but also misinformation make it even more clear that digitalization is here to stay. In order to not become excluded from society, work life or even governmental services, the possession of basic digital skills is key.

> **Digitalization shapes our lives. Therefore, people must be empowered to not only use digital devices, but to shape the underlying culture that comes with it.**

So how are digital tools important for Active Citizenship in particular? How do they influence this work? What does it mean to use digital and online tools? What are pro's and con's of Digital Active Citizenship?

Digitalization already plays a certain role in Active Citizenship – sometimes small, sometimes big, as shown in the classification section. When someone takes an action as a citizen it can be done both in the digital and in the physical space. The difference lies in how information gets shared, stored, remembered and what has a lasting impact.

Also analogue groups nowadays often depend on digital tools to organise themselves, communicate, prepare their documents, hold their meetings etc. They use E-Mail, Social Media, Google or simply Word documents, video conference systems, etc. In any way, it is important to understand that digital tools change the way participation and engagement are recorded.

Pros and Cons of Digital Active Citizenship

Every coin has its two sides, and Digital Active Citizenship is no exception. During our research on Digital Active Citizenship, we discovered numerous advantages. However, it's equally important to address the potential drawbacks.

PROS

- Administrative, communicative and organisational tasks can be carried out better, easier and faster

- Presentation and appearance of an action can be done in many (creative) ways via text, pictures, graphics, audio and video. Artificial Intelligence makes it even easier to do so.

Especially Online:

- Given the precondition of a working internet connection and a technical device, **everybody on earth has access** to the internet, no matter the race, age, religion, etc.

- **Access to information and educational resources:** With the internet being the biggest library on earth, one can inform and educate him- or herself about any desired topic, independent of time and location. The internet provides access to information and resources that otherwise might not be readily available locally.

- **Mobilisation of masses:** Social media plays a crucial role in mobilising large numbers of people to participate in protests and demonstrations. Campaigns and calls to action can quickly gain traction, leading to mass mobilisation in a short period of time. Movements can be spread fast with hashtags. More people can be reached than it would have been possible with an offline-only approach.

- **Communication and coordination:** Online platforms provide a decentralised and accessible means for activists to communicate, coordinate, and organise. These platforms allow users to quickly share information, discuss strategies, and mobilise supporters on a large scale. Interactive, real-time discussions with people from around the world are possible.

- People can meet online, which may **save time and money ressources** for not having to travel or preparing a physical meeting location.

- **Information dissemination:** Real-time communication enables instant outreach to people, and information can be updated within seconds. This facilitates the prompt presentation of civic actions to the public. News about protests, government actions or human rights abuses can be published by anyone. Activists and ordinary citizens can share videos, images, and firsthand accounts, providing the international community with a real-time view of events on the ground.

- **Reach young people:** Especially young people (16-29 years) in the EU use the internet (almost) on a daily basis, mostly for participating in social networks or reading the newspapers. Consequently, the internet is the #1 way to reach this age group and make them aware of Active Citizenship topics. They might not be reached via other ways of communication anymore (e.g. TV, radio, print media).

- **Economic Opportunities:** Online marketplaces, freelance work, and digital skills training can empower individuals.

- **Inspiration of people:** Social Media posts of active citizens may inspire other people to do the same.

- **Connecting people** e.g. via platforms, who might later be involved in offline activities as well.

- **Community Empowerment:** Digital Active Citizenship can facilitate communication and collaboration. It allows people to share experiences, discuss local issues, and work together for community development. Even more: People can get involved in actions around the globe.

- **Global solidarity:** The use of social media facilitates the creation of global networks of support and solidarity. People from around the world can express their support for protesters, share information, and coordinate advocacy efforts.

- **Amplification of voices:** The internet gives a platform to voices that are often marginalised or suppressed by traditional media. Minorities, activists, bloggers and ordinary citizens can share their perspectives and experiences, contributing to a more diverse narrative of the events unfolding.

- **Anonymity:** People who are too shy to participate offline, might rather participate online, as the internet provides a certain anonymity or at least some distance.

- **Knowledge and resources can be shared** easily and for free (e.g. open source software)

- **Civic funding** might be easier through crowdfunding activities than offline.

- **Evaluation of success:** (Social Media) Platforms and Websites offer statistics that can help initiators of Digital Active Citizenship to evaluate their success.

- **Crisis detection:** Global civic society is using digital technologies to create a new sensory apparatus with which it can detect crises worldwide and then mobilise networks of NGOs and NPOs to intervene.

- **Counteracting government censorship:** Activists can use social media to bypass government censorship and control of traditional media outlets. By disseminating information online, they can reach a broader audience and avoid the censorship imposed by some authoritarian regimes.
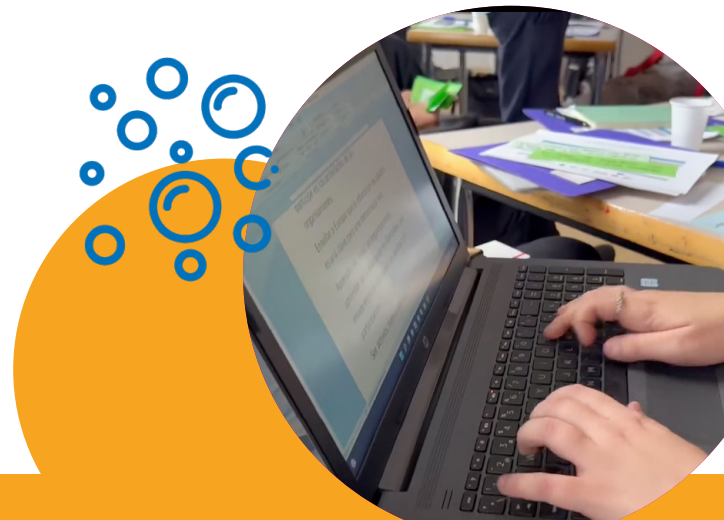
⊖ CONS

- **Data protection and data security** are a major concern. There is always a (residual) risk that digitized data gets hacked and/or stolen and misused.

- **Dependency on hardware:** The reliance on hardware is evident, yet not everyone has the means to afford a smartphone or laptop.

- **Dependency on tools:** If providers of digital tools change their General Terms and Conditions in a way that is not acceptable for active citizens, they need to look for other tools. This might be time-consuming and costly.

- **Exclusivity:** People inexperienced with technology and digitalization might be excluded from movements, knowledge, empowerment etc. and have limited possibilities for shaping their communities.

- **Environmental concerns:** The production of digital devices has far-reaching effects on people and nature. Valuable raw materials are required and the mining of metals extracted under problematic circumstances destroys habitats. A lot of energy is required, which releases CO^2 and therefore harms the climate. IT production may cause social problems and take place under inhumane working conditions.

Especially Online:

- **The internet (almost) does not forget.** Digital activities create data and may leave traces that others can find and hack. Every "Like" given, comment posted or photo uploaded is stored on an external server somewhere. The deletion of the content does not necessarily guarantee that it has disappeared from servers as well.

- **Limited autonomy:** The internet is not an entirely autonomous space or detached from external influences, unlike a physical meeting room that might be considered a more self-contained and controlled space. All digital tools (unless self-programmed) are offered by an external provider. A provider may encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from a global corporation with servers distributed worldwide to a small open-source developer community managing local servers. Though there is no 100 % independence given.

- **Amplification of voices:** As much as the internet empowers the voiceless, it also empowers actors like extreme organisations or conspiracy groups. These clusters pose an escalating threat to democracy.

- **Dissemination of manipulated information:** Especially with the latest developments of AI, it gets easier to generate wrong or misleading information and disseminate it purposefully to manipulate people. Consequently, if people do not have the most reliable information on hand, they might make poorer (political) decisions.

- **Need for critical media literacy:** If people are not trained in online literacy and critical thinking, they might not be aware of or underestimate the power of algorithms, which push tailor-made, pre-selected information to them and influence their behaviour.

- Online discussions and activities may be unfruitful if too many people participate.

- Potentially one has to face **hate, cyber bullying, shit storms** etc. when being engaged online.

- **Missing personal interaction:** Personal bonding might not happen as fast and as deep as with face-to-face meetings.

Trust-Crisis, conspiracy, radicalisation and dictate of transparency

Many people today not only seem to have doubts about politics, they also appear to have diminishing trust in the media. This lack of trust is often linked to emotions of fear and anger and is in turn fueled by Social Media.

The radicalisation of people, for example, also takes place primarily on the internet. Videos are politically instrumentalized to wage war. The feeling of being overwhelmed by the constant flood of news can be exploited more and more easily by propagandists. Furthermore, chat and cell phone recordings are becoming the new jurisdiction of the population in the media.

German media expert Sascha Lobo proposes a process-based, transparent and dialogic trust for the 21st century to counter the crisis of trust:

> *"This would mean a deep insight into the genesis of political decisions and the production of media. People today expect complete transparency and that everything can be published in case of doubt."*

For Digital Active Citizenship this once again emphasises the importance of fundamental digital education, enabling individuals to discern between accurate and misleading news.

3 Empowerment on the Internet

Active Citizenship used to be a practice in which face-to-face meetings played a central role.
In the age of advancing digitization, however, new possibilities are opening up for participation in civic, political and social movements. In this context, questions like the following arise:

- **Is it possible to inspire and motivate people in the same way?**

- **Does being active in the digital space really influence political events?**

- **Is the feeling of community and belonging on the internet just as intense as it is in "real" life?**

We asked 7 people of different generations and countries to share their opinions.
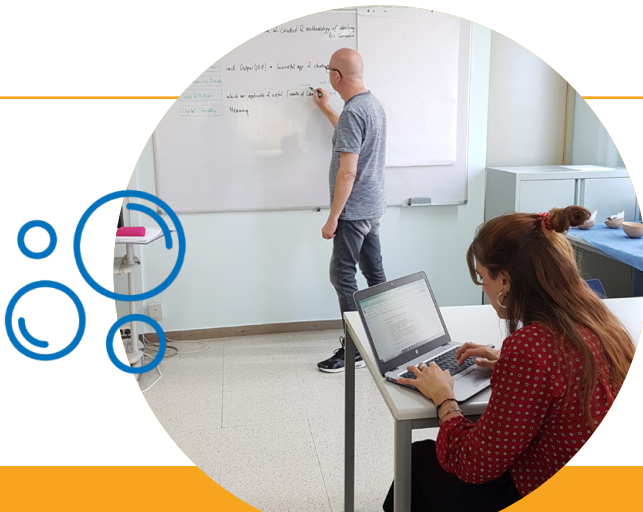
Statements.

Statement Gisela, Germany (60)

1

„It can be misleading to use the phrase "both online and offline" in one breath, as if it is the same experience, just in another ‚room'. In our discussions about digital active citizens we need to be far more explicit about the fact that empowerment and disempowerment are depersonalised through the use of algorithms and they work as a background matrix in the digital sphere. As this matrix is undemocratic and favours those in power, digital active citizens need the wisdom when to go offline in order to nurture an open, values-based, human capacity for democratic discourse and action."

Statement Laura, Germany (30)

2

„Articles, discussions, connections, crime and hate in the digital sphere affect real people and their decisions as well as decisions in politics. So does activism. For many marginalised groups, the Internet can be a safe space – you share your thoughts, you feel understood and empowered. You stand up for yourself and your peer group. Of course, there is a simultaneity of online and offline empowerment, but without the internet a lot of people wouldn't have the chance to speak up."

3

Statement Leonie, Germany (20-25)

„In my opinion Digital Active Citizenship offers a special approach to recognising people in their diversity and their different realities of life. We can reach those people who are otherwise overlooked and/or ignored. Those who would not be able to participate in (political) events due to a certain impairment, insufficient access to public transport, lack of childcare, lack of time and/or social capacities. And yet the format does not reach out to everyone, but makes it easier for everyone to participate. One word that describes Digital Active Citizenship for me is „compromise". The compromise and the constant negotiation to meet the different demands of us and our time. Social interactions and relationships require compromise in real and digital space - our democracy is perhaps the greatest compromise between the people living in it. And it often turns out that making compromises pays off!"

4

Statement Özgun, Spain (36)

„It is not a surprise for anyone that the world has become more digitalized in the last years. Technology has become a part of life and to carry out a Digital Active Citizenship is of course possible. However, you need some basic knowledge of which platforms do exist and how to use them. To create a username and a password can be challenging for many people, especially the ones who belong to the most vulnerable groups in society. Furthermore, we have never had access to this much information before, and this in turn has raised many challenges, especially in being able to differentiate wrong information from correct ones. For this reason, Digital Active Citizenship is possible, but with the right tools. One good example of another European project that is directly working to combat desinformation and strengthen social inclusion and active digital participation is Desinfoend (https:// desinfoend.eu)."

Statement Hanna, Austria (29)

„I think that inspiration and motivation also work via digital media. If, for example, a well-known personality that I respect speaks out in favour of a petition for a referendum in a video, I tend to check out this petition for a referendum and possibly also sign it. This would have motivated me to get actively involved through a digital medium and the referendum could influence political events. However, I don't think that the feeling of belonging online is the same as in „real" life. To feel like I belong to a group, I need to meet and socialise face to face. Online meetings help, and helped me to maintain friendships and contacts, especially during Corona. My experience is that it is difficult to create a friendship/connection online without ever meeting physically.

So I think it's definitely possible to inspire and motivate people online. I also think that you can get involved politically through Digital Active Citizenship. However, I think it is important for a sense of togetherness and cohesion to meet people „in real life" and to establish and maintain contact in real space.

I would like to give an example of digital active citizenship: The organisation Mimikama has set itself the goal of uncovering and clarifying false reports on the internet, especially on social media. It has definitely brought together people who have the knowledge and skills to use digital media to recognise and expose fake news. Social Media users have been benefiting from Mimikama's work since 2011 https://www.mimikama.org/."

6

Statement Jonathan, Sweden (45)

„Citizens in the „digital age" still need face to face encounters and meetings to grow as humans and develop knowledge and understanding. A testimony to this need is the rise of a new movement for example in Spain and France for practising democracy in face-to-face citizens assemblies and in other ways on the local level where face-to-face interaction is still very possible. At the same time digital tools are being developed by people in this movement, for example the Decidem-platform that has been used both in Barcelona and many other cities to facilitate more participatory forms of democratic deliberation. This gives me hope that the yearning for more participation may also lead to a developed practice of democratic governance which is both digital and face-to-face.

A hybrid form of a deepened democracy stands out as a much more desirable alternative than a pure digital democracy. I believe specially that democratic participatory processes need often to be rooted in place. Thus, participatory budgeting on the city district level as well as in rural communities seems to be a very promising way to move forward. This together with broad efforts to promote economic forms of democracy, I believe, is the way forward. The digital world, when detached from local communities or not clearly related to specific communities of practice or specific local communities, tends to become plagued by filter bubbles and polarisation."

7

Statement Laura, Germany (20-25)

„Digital empowerment manifests itself through the ability to share knowledge, express oneself and engage in different communities. Social Media platforms open up space for the spread of social movements aimed at positive change. The digital space creates an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated and individual experiences are seen as strengths.

By accessing educational opportunities online, people can expand their skills and engage in areas that inspire their passion. The internet serves as a catalyst for knowledge sharing, promoting individual development and collective empowerment. The digital world also enables the formation of support networks to help people through difficult times. From online mentoring to self-help groups, digital platforms provide a space to share experiences and resources, leading to a strengthened community.

Overall, digital engagement opens up a world of opportunities in which people are empowered to pursue their goals, strengthen their identity and bring about positive change in society. It is up to us to seize these opportunities and shape the digital space as a place of empowerment and inclusive participation."

The importance of smartphones

General importance

Smartphones have become an indispensable part of everyday life. It is clearly the most popular device even before the laptop or desktop PC for checking messages, taking photos, playing videos and using a wide variety of apps and for mobile shopping.

The advantages are obvious: smartphones are easy to use, handy, portable and can be used anywhere. They have become increasingly accessible and affordable over time. Not even a third of users could imagine life without a cell phone. 95 % of 14-49 aged Germans use a smartphone. Young people in particular often say that they can hardly imagine life without a cell phone. Most of them already have their own device as a child: 3 out of 4 ten-year-olds have their own smartphone.

The global number of smartphone users amounted to around 4.7 billion in 2022, around 500 million more than in the previous year. A further increase to 5.1 billion is forecasted for 2028. 6 out of 10 people in Germany use an additional tablet. The large number can also be explained by the fact that many devices are replaced quickly.

The continent with the most smartphone users in absolute terms is, unsurprisingly, Asia. In 2021, more than half of all users will be based here. There are around 485 million smartphone users in Europe and 302 million in North America. In terms of smartphone penetration rates, however, North America and Europe are still ahead of Asia.
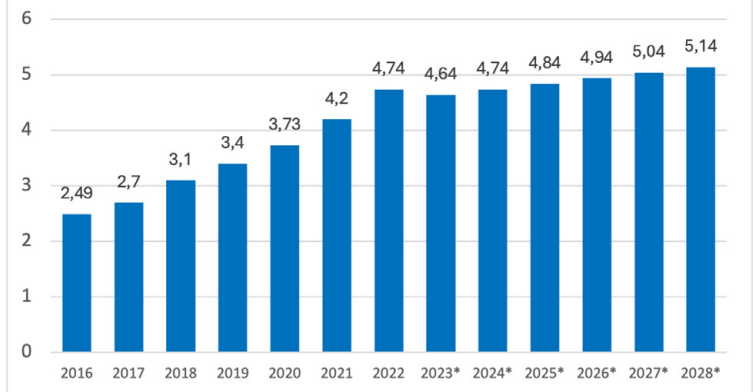

Fig.2: Number of smartphones worldwide, Source: Statista 2023

Importance of smartphones in Active Citizenship

The preceding chapters have underscored the significance of digital skills in general and, more specifically, the opportunities for Digital Active Citizenship (DAC) in an online context. Now, the paramount role of smartphones as the foremost hardware device for widespread online participation becomes unmistakable. Users basically carry the tools for Digital Active Citizenship in their pockets, granting them the ability to engage in various activities independent of their location – from centers of big cities to the most rural areas (given a working internet connection).

Notably, smartphones offer a cost-effective alternative compared to other devices like laptops. Smartphones, functioning as versatile instruments, empower individuals in their pursuit of Digital Active Citizenship. They facilitate seamless information access, foster communication, enable collaboration, drive activism, support community building, allow for online education and facilitate participation in civic processes. The widespread use of smartphones augments the potential for individuals to actively contribute to and shape the democratic landscape in the digital age.

However, it is important to acknowledge both the egalitarian and empowering potential of smartphones, as well as the potential exclusion of certain vulnerable groups, such as the elderly. Moreover, the socially manipulative use of this technology has been previously highlighted. Beyond demographic factors, the level of education also emerges as a significant determinant of digital inclusion.

In navigating the landscape of Digital Active Citizenship, recognizing the dual nature of smartphones – bridging connectivity and potential disparities – becomes imperative. Addressing these considerations ensures a more inclusive and equitable approach to leveraging technology for civic engagement in our evolving digital society.

New horizons for specific groups

The internet has democratised access to information and communication, providing a valuable resource for activists across a broad spectrum of causes. Digital Active Citizenship helps certain groups and communities in particular to become visible and politically active.
Here are some groups that in our opinion particularly benefit from leveraging the internet for activism:

People in rural areas

Digital Active Citizenship can present opportunities for people in rural areas and of course for those living in developing countries. There, the mobile phone is a special kind of development engine. Cell phones bridge bad roads and long distances, enabling communication outside the immediate vicinity. Where there is no bank, people can transfer or receive money, and where there is no hospital within reach, they can receive mobile medical advice.

Digitalisation gives people access to information as well as educational resources that are not available locally. Online education and e-learning platforms can therefore help to bridge the educational gap in rural areas.

Digital Active Citizenship can also facilitate communication and collaboration within rural communities. It allows people to share experiences, discuss local issues, and work together for community development.
Finally, digitalization can serve as a bridge to economic opportunities e.g. via online marketplaces.

Examples of empowerment in rural areas:

1 *In many countries in the Global South, mobile phones are now being used to help improve living conditions. Small farmers use their cell phones to call up market prices or weather forecasts, while mothers receive medical advice for their children.*
Software specialists from Uganda have developed WinSenga, an application that can monitor the heartbeat of the child in the mother's womb. As many children still die shortly after birth due to a lack of medical care in Uganda, the developers hope that the app will save a large number of lives.

2 *The University of Berkeley is awarding an innovation prize for concepts that combine mobile communication and a commitment to human rights. One winner is the Kenyan initiative Ushahidi. When violent clashes broke out after the Kenyan presidential elections in 2008, Ushahidi created a platform that documented these clashes in real time. Using a cell phone, messages, images and videos can be sent from the scene of the incident to the platform, where they are visualised graphically on a map. Ushahidi's technology is available today as open source software and can be used in crisis areas around the world.*

3 *A very successful project in Bangladesh is Grameenphone by the Grameen Telecom Corporation (GTC) in cooperation with the Grameen Bank. It provides small loans primarily to women from rural regions in Bangladesh to purchase cell phones and offer telephone services in their home villages. The so-called phone ladies secure their livelihood by selling telephone minutes in this way and connect even the most remote villages with the rest of the world. There are copycat projects in Uganda, Haiti, Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines and Rwanda.*

Organisations, activists groups and movements

Especially in countries with anti-democratic forms of government, Digital Active Citizenship is a powerful way to network politically under an oppressive regime. Social Media platforms, such as Facebook, X (Twitter), and YouTube, can be instrumental in mobilising and organising people, disseminating information, and amplifying voices during protests.

Freedom House reports that 71 % of people who have access to the Internet live in countries where individuals were arrested or imprisoned for posting content on political, social, or religious issues. 65 % live in countries where individuals have been attacked or killed for their online activities since June 2018.

Social Media is very effective with regards to decentralised and quick communication and coordination. These platforms allow activists to quickly share information, discuss strategies, and mobilise supporters on a large scale. Furthermore, Social Media enables the rapid spread of information and news about protests, government actions or human rights abuses. Activists and ordinary citizens can share videos, images, and firsthand accounts, providing the international community with a real-time view of events on the ground.

It can therefore give a voice to people and groups that are marginalised or suppressed by traditional media. Finally, activists can use Social Media to bypass government censorship and control of traditional media outlets – at least unless these platforms get censored by governments.

While Social Media played a vital role in some political movements, its impact and effectiveness varies across different countries and contexts. However, it is just one aspect of a complex set of factors that contributes to a political or civic situation. Economic, political, and social conditions, as well as the actions of governments and security forces also play a significant role in shaping the outcomes of activism.

Examples of activities groups and associations engaged in DAC:

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs):
NGOs use the internet to raise awareness, mobilise supporters and campaign for various causes. Online platforms enable them to reach a global audience, organise events, and facilitate online petitions.

Civil Rights Activists:
Activists working on civil rights issues, such as racial equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender equality, use the internet to share information, organise protests, and build communities. Social Media platforms are particularly instrumental in amplifying their messages.

Environmental Activists:
Environmental groups leverage the internet for disseminating climate change info, organizing global movements, coordinating environmental efforts, and crowdfunding projects.

Youth Movements:
Youth-led movements, such as those advocating for education reform or gun control, use the internet to organise and mobilise young activists. Platforms like X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok are popular among these groups to share information and coordinate actions.

Global Human Rights Advocates:
Organisations working on human rights issues at a global scale benefit from the internet to document and expose human rights abuses. They use online platforms to engage the international community, seek support, and coordinate efforts to address violations.

Whistleblower Platforms:
Platforms that allow people to expose corruption, human rights abuses, or other misconduct benefit from the internet's anonymity and global reach. Websites like WikiLeaks enable individuals to share information securely.

Digital Rights Activists:
Activists focused on digital rights, internet freedom, and privacy use online platforms to raise awareness about surveillance issues, fight against censorship, and advocate for policies that protect individuals' online freedoms.

Digital Natives

The digitally savvy group of teenagers and young adults in particular would be expected to increase their online activism, because they are largely equipped with digital skills: While 71 % of 16- to 24-year-olds in Europe have basic digital skills, this figure is only 42 % for 55- to 64-year-olds and just 25 % for the over-65s. The degree of urbanisation had no effect on achieving at least a basic level of digital literacy.

The high level of online news consumption among young people does not always go hand in hand with media literacy, but young people are interested in the topics of children, youth and human rights, war and peace, environmental, nature and climate protection as well as social justice. As in the physical world, active engagement is anchored in the real world, but is facilitated online by simple participation opportunities such taking part in discussions.

Low-threshold online activities can therefore definitely encourage engagement and participation. The role of the smartphone as an ever present tool to connect to the digital world provides great potential here.

CLICKTIVISM – IS THE SOLUTION JUST A CLICK AWAY?

"Clicktivism" refers to engaging in political or social activism through minimal-effort online actions such as signing online petitions or sharing content on Social Media.

On the one hand, this is criticized as lacking direct confrontation with an issue and being just a quick way to buy oneself a kind of carte blanche to not have to get involved elsewhere.

On the other hand, others rather see it as a complement to participating in street protest or other „real-life" activities. Contrary to the criticism of clicktivism, some even say that participating in online protest practices has led them to become more involved offline again.

What do YOU think?

4

Digital Active Citizenship in Folk High Schools

Skills for Digital Active Citizenship

Before looking into the required skills of digital active citizens, the "CDC butterfly" will be presented as a basic overview of competences needed for an effective participation in a democratic culture.

CDC stands for "Competences for Democratic Culture" as defined by the Council of Europe. Independent of digital or analogue civic engagement, the following competences are needed:
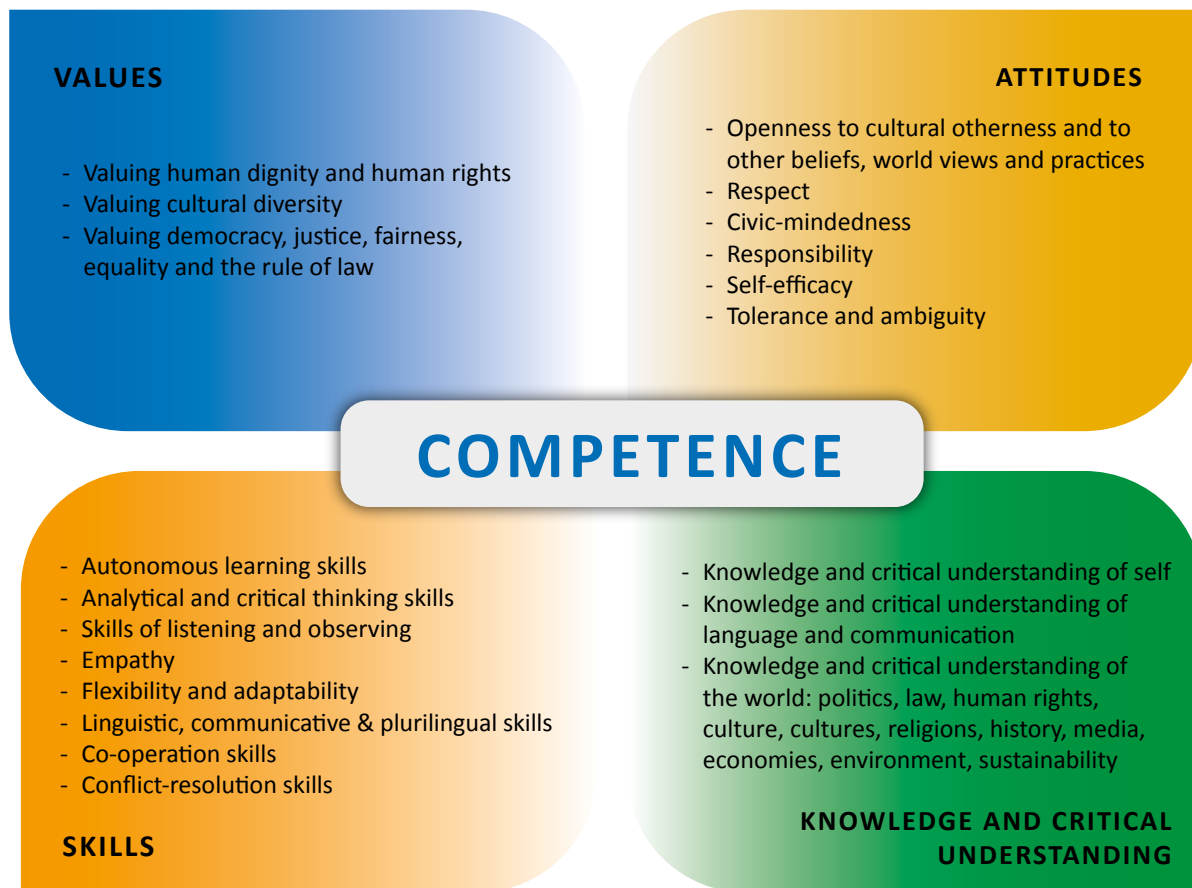
VALUES

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

ATTITUDES

- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance and ambiguity

COMPETENCE

- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative & plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

SKILLS

- Knowledge and critical understanding of self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

Fig.3: CDC-Butterfly by the Council of Europe

The butterflies' competences are to be complemented by the following skills, if being a DIGITAL active citizen:

Knowing about ways to participate through digital technologies

A digital active citizen has to be first of all aware of HOW participation is possible through digital technologies. Subsequently, a person needs to be able to seek digital opportunities for self-empowerment and participation and use the respective digital services. As mentioned previously, there are different ways of Digital Active Citizenship that a citizen should be aware of (formal, informal, community-based).
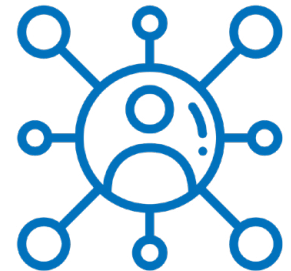
Technical competences, information literacy and familiarity with terms

Those three aspects build the foundational base for being an actual DIGITAL active citizen. Technical competences refer to the ability of using technical devices, basic office software as well as the internet.
Information literacy goes one step further and comprises the ability to browse, search and filter data and digital information and subsequently analyse, critically evaluate and finally organise them. Also knowing the most relevant terms and expressions of the digital world is a precondition to being a digital active citizen.

These competences are important to avoid digital exclusion. In this matter, it is also necessary to stay open minded and willing to adapt to new technologies.

Digital communication and collaboration

This includes knowing and using a variety of communication tools when interacting with others via digital technology as well as sharing data, information and content through them. Also the co-creation of data by means of digital collaboration tools like Etherpads and Apps like Mural or Padlet belong to this skill. They come in handy especially for working groups and teams.

Critical media literacy and critical thinking

Critical media literacy is more than being informed about what is happening in the world – independent of whether information is gathered online or offline.

It is about the ability to understand, analyse, reflect and interpret content and sources critically. It is also about being aware that provided information might not be 100 % correct ("fake news"). And it is about empowerment, referring to one's ability to identify manipulative content and having confidence in this skill. This set of skills needs to be developed through (adult) education and the „constant exchange with the environment around us" (European Commission, 2019, p. 15).

However, critical media literacy can be tricky, especially with the current development of AI technology: text, pictures, videos can be created and manipulated rapidly – sometimes on purpose, sometimes not. Identifying misinformation becomes particularly challenging when the presented facts are not entirely false, but a mix of true and false statements. It is also crucial to recognize that presented information can indeed be true for one person, but wrong for another.

Consumer awareness

The internet is no independent space. As internet users we are consumers of provided services. This can be web hosts, Social Media companies, online shops, communication businesses etc. A digital active citizen needs to be aware of this fact in order to deal responsibly with the online world and maintain his/her own autonomy.

Ethic and empathy as competence

The anonymity of the internet and the lack of personal face-to-face interaction seems to foster „unethical" behaviour like disrespect for other people's opinions and ways of expression, hate speech etc. Therefore, behaving ethically, showing empathy towards others and being aware of cultural and generational diversity is a crucial requirement for a positive World Wide Web. A digital active citizen fosters the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy and equality.

Digital content creation

Digital content creation is the ability to create and edit digital content in various formats, both offline and online. The possibilities are manyfold: A simple word document, write-protected pdf's, contributions to a wiki page or the creation of photos and videos are some examples. This skill is especially important for digital active citizens who want to operate their own blogs, websites, Social Media channels, platforms or similar.

e-Presence/Managing a digital identity

Users of internet and online tools need to be aware that their activities leave traces. Providers and companies can collect data about users e.g. via registration details or tracking cookies. This does not necessarily have to be a danger. However, it is important for people to know which data may be collected and what they may be used for e.g. for personalised advertisements and pre-selected content.

It is also crucial to keep in mind who can find data about oneself on the internet, like (future) employers or (future) political opponents. In this regard, digital active citizens need to know how to protect their reputation and build a positive online identity. One might even have multiple online identities depending on the platform used e.g. a personal profile on facebook versus a professional profile on LinkedIn. Consequently, it is recommended to think twice before liking, sharing or commenting on certain posts, especially when having a public role.

TIPP!

Wanna know, if you have been a victim of data breach?

Try
https://haveibeen-pwned.com/

Knowing how to protect yourself and your data

A famous tweet going around on X (Twitter) goes like this:

"Sometimes, as an IT person, you feel like a shepherd. However, the sheep are drunk. And burn. And click on everything!!"

Along with the many advantages of the internet comes the downside of being vulnerable to online attacks. Therefore, every user's motto should be "Think before you click". Nevertheless, everyone can become a victim of cybercrime. For this reason, users need to be aware of and informed about measures to reduce the dangers of hacking, phishing, data breach etc. and know how to handle such situations (password management, use of firewalls and anti-virus programs, store and backup data, responsible use of sensitive data on the internet, avoid visiting dubious websites etc.).

User rights, copyright and licensing

Within the European Union the **GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)** regulates the processing of personal data throughout the EU. Users within the EU have certain rights towards data processors, e.g. the right to information, right to deletion and to „being forgotten", the right to restriction of processing or the right of objection. Furthermore, users should be aware of the fact that digital services inform their clients about the use of personal data in a "Privacy Policy".

Since many big internet service providers are located in the USA, a basic knowledge on how the data transfer between the EU and the US is regulated is recommended. In order to provide a clear mechanism for the transfer of personal data between those two regions, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the European Commission developed the **"EU-U.S Data Privacy Framework (DPF)"**. This framework aims to ensure a level of data protection that is consistent with EU law. The respective adequacy decision of the European Commission entered into effect on July 10th, 2023. The DPF is the successor of the Privacy Shield, which was declared invalid in 2020.

A digital active citizen must be mindful of their rights to safeguard personal data. However, users engaging with digital content not only possess rights but also carry responsibilities. Notably, the application of copyright and licences on digital content comes into play. Not all content created by others is freely usable, shareable or editable. Even free content often mandates some form of source acknowledgment. Consequently, a fundamental understanding of open-source licensing, such as Creative Commons, is essential. The same principle applies when an individual shares digital content with the public, requiring clear guidelines on how the content can be utilised.
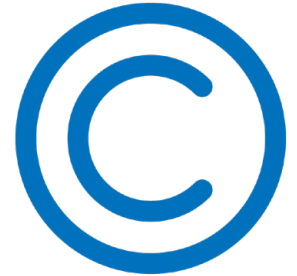
Health awareness

Digitalisation may have direct or indirect impacts on people's well-being. Being able to monitor and manage one's use of digital technology is important. This refers to e.g. avoiding online addiction and excessive use of digital devices, ergonomics, cyber mobbing etc.

Rights, regulations and hate on the internet

Cyber mobbing, hate speech, shitstorms etc. represent one of the darkest aspects of the internet. Instances of hatred, malice, and disrespect towards individuals, groups or organisations appear to be more prevalent online than in the physical world. This could be due to the increased level of anonymity and the absence of face-to-face interaction. Online, there's no requirement to confront and look into another person's eyes when expressing negativity. The interaction remains abstract. The motivations behind treating others with disrespect can be manyfold.

In any case, it is important for internet users to be aware that this sort of attack exists. Disrespectful behaviour on the internet must lead to consequences and the limits of free speech must be clearly communicated. Such consequences can be e.g. the closure of the user's profile, exclusion from social online groups or even legal action. It must be clear to all internet users that a minimum level of respect and empathy is a required standard. However, the line between free speech and criminal behaviour (like slander or defamation) is often hard to define. Therefore, civil courage and active campaigning on the internet is as important as it is in the real world. Ideally, a digital active citizen knows how to deal with such situations and is also aware of potentially manipulative algorithms, which e.g. promote provoking comments to trigger discussions.

Protecting the environment

Digital technologies have a certain environmental impact that users need to be aware of. This refers e.g. to CO_2 emissions caused by data streaming, energy intensity of server farms, use of resources for the production of digital devices and the possibility of recycling them or planned obsolescence. However, positive effects, such as enhanced energy efficiency in private households through AI, the transition to paperless offices, and the utilisation of car-sharing platforms, are all the more delightful.

Problem solving

The autonomous solving of technical problems helps to empower users of digital technology. This implies that the user is either already familiar with addressing an issue or is aware of methods and places to discover a suitable solution, such as searching for answers in an online forum.

Situation of Digital Active Citizenship in Folk High Schools

Just like the presence of Active Citizenship activities in general may vary quite a lot from Folk High School to Folk High Schools, the same is true for Digital Active Citizenship. The project group gained the impression that especially Swedish Folk High Schools already offer a good amount of activities and courses related to Digital Active Citizenship.

Here are some flashlights from interviews which were conducted for the paper „Folk High Schools and Active Citizenship in Europe". This publication was also created within the PROMOCITI project.

Tamara Wintereder, SPES Zukunftsakademie, Austria

"Inspired by Corona a wide variety of things are being tried out in-house. There is this multimedia-screen in the house, which is intended for hybrid meetings. And otherwise we do video conferences very often or use online platforms like Miro or so. But I personally like to work with materials. And I have the feeling that people are happy when the beamer is switched off."

Polonca Kosi Klemenšak, Bildungshaus Schloss Retzhof, Austria

"We started with the topic of virtual reality. This has been well received by children, who watch things through these VR glasses. But we also made a film about the former concentration camp Aflenz and interviews with a few witnesses, which you can watch with the VR glasses on our homepage. And we don´t have a printed program anymore. Somehow it works."

Ulrika Sandin, Red Cross Folk High School, Sweden

"We have a long experience with distance learning, for many years we had a fair trade course at distance. The courses "Acting without Discrimination" and "Migration and Social Sustainability" are distance learning courses with a number of face-to-face meetings. The fact that they are distance learning courses has made it possible to combine them with professional work."

Mariusz Mówka, Kashubian Folk High School Foundation, Poland

"Our adventure with distance learning techniques is almost 2 years old. During this time we have been able to connect the FHS to a fibre-optic network, learn how to use some software tools, learn how to use available online services, learn how to finally edit multimedia digital products. I think that today we are in a situation where we have had a wave of enthusiasm for these new methods. We have also recognized the limitations of using these methods."

Helmut Außerwöger, Bildungshaus Schloss Puchberg, Austria

"Digitalization is a challenge. We have many good experiences with digital and hybrid activities, especially in terms of outreach. We have participants who would never have come to our house."

Bernhard Nägele, Bildungshaus Kloster St. Ulrich, Germany

"We would like to deal with all of the questions especially for the young farmers: How do I operate in the digital space? How do I design a homepage? What do I do in the event of a shitstorm? But we`re not there yet in Baden-Württemberg. There is no statewide platform yet. As a small house, we can't afford that ourselves.

Antje Pecher, Heimvolkshochschule Seddiner See, Germany

"Digital solutions have been supporting our seminars mainly since the Corona pandemic, e.g. through online seminars or plugging in speakers and participants. Therefore, blended learning takes place in the form of hybrid events.
These formats will continue to be established in our educational work in the future, if it fits thematically and organizationally."

Chances and Challenges of Digital Active Citizenship for Folk High Schools

CHANCES

Embracing Digital Active Citizenship can bring many attractive chances for Folk High Schools:

1. **Ideal Space for (Digital) Active Citizenship:** Folk High Schools, as neutral educational spaces with strong regional networks, are ideal for (Digital) Active Citizenship activities. Let your school be a meeting place!

2. **Demand for Digitization:** With only 54 % of EU citizens possessing basic digital skills, there is a growing demand for digital education, which implies great potential for Folk High Schools.

3. **Improved USP and Visibility:** Participating in Digital Active Citizenship provides a Folk High School with the opportunity to enhance its standing and potentially adopt a new role. It is a chance to increase visibility in the public sphere. The efforts in (Digital) Active Citizenship may result in the formation of new collaborations and networks.

4. **Being a reliable partner to people and organisations:** Instead of relying on individuals to come to the Folk High School, the school proactively engages with the community in its region. It positions itself as a reliable and steady ally, offering assistance and a venue for addressing issues when political support is unavailable or not possible.

5. **Attract New Target Groups:** Digital Active Citizenship attracts new target groups, including digitally literate younger adults, expanding the reach and relevance of Folk High Schools.

6. **Wide Reach and Inclusiveness:** Digital Active Citizenship enables broader engagement, overcoming geographical barriers and increasing inclusivity, especially for individuals in rural areas or those hesitant to attend in-person meetings.

7. **Maintaining Democracy:** Digital Active Citizenship plays a role in sustaining peace and democracy by providing opportunities for self-efficacy, education, and participation, addressing contemporary societal issues.

8. **Critical Media Literacy:** Digital Active Citizenship contributes to critical media literacy, empowering individuals to make informed political decisions and navigate online content effectively.

9. **Power of Community for Folk High Schools:** Digital Active Citizenship activities foster networking and community building, creating a „Folk High School Community" that supports the school's reputation and attracts participants.

10. **Cost Savings:** An issue commonly faced with Active Citizenship is the scarcity of funding. Digital Active Citizenship could potentially provide more economical means for collaboration.

11. **Increased Resilience:** In times of crisis, Digital Active Citizenship allows continued work, immediate contact and idea exchange, which means increasing resilience, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
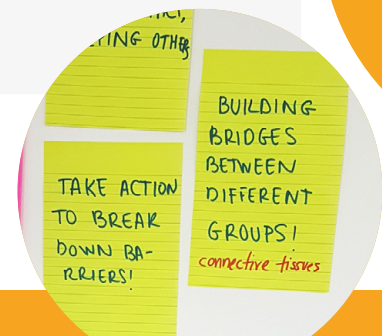
CHALLENGES

Active Citizenship involves intrinsic motivation, commitment, courage, and passion, but these aspects can act as barriers to engagement. Challenges in implementing (Digital) Active Citizenship in Folk High Schools include:

1. **Fear of the New:** Some schools may be hesitant to embrace new and unfamiliar educational approaches related to Digital Active Citizenship.

2. **Sponsor Support:** The extent of Digital Active Citizenship implementation depends on the school sponsor's (= financing body) willingness, impacting the alignment with the school's mission.

3. **Resource and Funding Challenges**: Inconsistent funding and limited resources pose barriers to increased engagement in (Digital) Active Citizenship, impacting time, budget, staff and overall school operations.

4. **Lack of Motivation:** Difficulty in reaching and motivating people for Active Citizenship, especially in times of misinformation and the necessity of digital skills, poses challenges. It seems challenging to encourage individuals to overcome fear and engage in respectful dialogue with others.

5. **Balance Between Paid and Unpaid Work:** Tensions may arise between volunteers and staff due to the key role of unpaid volunteering in Digital Active Citizenship. While volunteers may feel exploited, the staff is facing an excessive workload.

6. **Fast-Changing Technical Developments:** Rapid technical advancements make it challenging for schools to stay updated on regulations, software, and hardware.

7. **Lack of Digital Skills:** This may especially, but not exclusively, refer to older people, which are often an important target group. Nevertheless, the deficiency in digital skills may extend beyond customers and also affect employees.

8. **Technical Equipment and Internet Infrastructure:** Unequal access to suitable technical equipment and reliable internet, especially in rural areas, may be a problem.

9. **Curricula & Flexibility:** Creating relevant Digital Active Citizenship curricula is challenging, requiring flexibility to adapt to the rapidly evolving landscape.

10. **Competences and Skills of Employees:** There's a need for educational programs and ongoing training to address deficiencies in understanding Active Citizenship and digital competencies among employees. PROMOCITI aims to provide assistance in these areas.

Implementing Digital Active Citizenship
A Quick Guide

1. **Educate yourself** on what Digital Active Citizen is and what it can look like.

2. **Choose the target group** you want to reach e.g. people between 20 and 30 years in rural areas.

3. **Choose an activity** that seems adequate for you and your Folk High School to realise. Start with something small to begin with and see how it goes. Plan for a small pilot project. Consider your ressources.

4. Optional, but ideal: Try to **talk to the target group** first, before starting off and try to find out their needs and preferences. Is there interest? How do they want to interact? Which platforms and/or communication channels make sense? How much time are they willing to spend? etc.

5. Check which **Active Citizenship skills and digital skills** you need to realise the project. Remember: no need for perfection. Less skills might be needed when starting off small. Continue learning as you go.

6. Be aware of the **Pro's and Con's** that might come along with the chosen activity.

7. Make a **first concept draft** and present it to the Head and/or owner of the school. Be well-prepared and well-informed about chances and challenges. Clearly work out the benefits to the school and the value to the target group. Think about how challenges can be tackled. Here, again, small projects in the beginning might be more likely to get approved. Act strategically!

8. Think about how you want to **evaluate** the activity.

9. **TRY IT OUT!**

10. Evaluate and **collect learnings**

11. **Adapt** the offer/activity for the future

12. **Get further training** on Active Citizenship and Digitization. You might even create new offers out of your newly gained knowledge.

5
Conclusions

Conclusion on Digital Active Citizenship

The digital revolution has firmly established its presence and is undeniably here to stay, permeating many aspect of our daily lives. Active Citizenship is no exception. The internet has democratised access to information and communication, providing a valuable resource for activists across a broad spectrum of causes.

Folk High Schools are places of encounter and exchange. They act as peacemakers that stand for positivity, diversity, respect and places of hope. Their existence should support a country's democratic education and strengthen its democratic structures.

In order to be able to do so in the future, Folk High Schools and similar institutions may need to broaden their concepts of Active Citizenship to the digital sphere. Digitalization shapes our lives. After all, the digital realm provides great potential to create positive change in society and allows people to pursue their goals, engage with others and strengthen their sense of self. Therefore, people must be empowered to not only use digital devices, but to shape the underlying culture that comes with it.

It is no question of „Offline Active Citizenship" against „Online Active Citizenship". It is rather a matter of offline AND online. Both aspects complement and strengthen each other.

Digital Active Citizenship helps certain groups and communities in particular to become visible and (politically) active. One such group are people in rural areas, who are often an important target group of Folk High Schools.

To be able to provide professional support and educate society in this regard, the staff of Folk High Schools, especially pedagogues, need to constantly stay informed about developments in both areas, Active Citizenship and digitalization. Adequate training is crucial. In this regard, PROMOCITI aims to provide impulses and orientation on how and where to start.

The numerous opportunities for Folk High Schools when engaging in (Digital) Active Citizenship have been mentioned earlier.

At this point we would like to highlight again the fact that Folk High Schools as neutral spaces are just THE ideal place for it.

We encourage our readers: Use the potential and have fun getting started with your journey in Digital Active Citizenship!
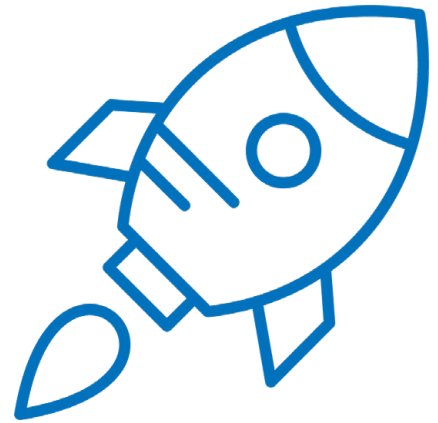
Annex

How to: Online & Hybrid-Meetings

As part of the PROMOCITI project, two Train-the-Trainer modules were organized involving 15 educators from five countries. The aim was to inspire adult education institutions, such as Folk High Schools, to incorporate Active Citizenship into their offerings and educational programs through these modules. During the first Train-the-Trainer module, the focus was on discussing the technological aspects of Online and Hybrid Meetings, among other topics. Despite the significant learning curve experienced by the participants during the COVID-19 period, it was worth mentioning again for the sake of completeness. Prior to this, a survey was conducted among the educators to identify their needs in this area.

OVERVIEW CONTENTS

DAY 1	- Survey results - Video Conference Software Overview - Zoom - Tipps
DAY 2	Warm-up Games, Collaboration Tools

DEFINITION

Hybrid Meeting

An event, that takes place in a physical location and online simultaneously.

A subset of people attends the meeting located together in the same place. Other participants join by web conference.

(Source: https://www.lucidmeetings.com/glossary/hybrid-meeting)

PROMOCITI TTT1 – BARCELONA

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey of expectations

PROMOCITI - Promoting Active Citizenship
Erasmus+ project n° 2021-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000027073

Online Survey- to pedagogical staff and learners of adult education pro the needs of Active Citizenship.

With this information which we will be able to collect the point of view ar each one of the TTT in Active Citizenship as the first **step to create the C**

Thank you for taking the time to answer!

The BIGGEST CHALLENGES
(sorted by importance)

1 Getting both groups connected
→ after breaks
→ lot of tools/methods are not possible in hybrid meetings
→ Language barrier, if international

2 Technical issues
→ Good internet connection
→ Audio
→ Video

3 Didactics
→ Not loosing the connection of participants

What would you like to learn?
(sorted by importance)

1 Getting both groups connected / Didactics
→ Storytelling / Write an exciting script for both groups
→ How to moderate meetings
→ Language barrier

2 Technical issues
- Not too expensive for both, organizers and users

3 Best tricks / worst mistakes

4 Increase willingness of trainers/volunteers to use hybrid

SOFTWARE (1)

Software	Costs	Mobile App	Subjective Stability	Data protection	Comments
Zoom	• Limited free plan (40 min) • Starting: ca. 12 €/month	Yes	Very high	Privacy policy; SCC contract incl. Data Processing Agreement (DPA)	
MS Teams	• Limited free plan (60 min) • Starting: 3,40 €/month • Free option for education possible	Yes	High	Privacy policy; SCC contract; Data Processing Agreement (DPA)	
Big Blue Button	Open Source, but depends on the hosting (free for own hosting -> consider server requirements)	No. Participation via Browser possible	Depends on the hosting	Depends on the hosting. See also https://bigbluebutton.org/privacy/	

PROMOCITI TTT1 – BARCELONA

SOFTWARE (2)

Software	Costs	App	Subjective Stability	Data protection	Comments
GoToMeeting	Starting: ca. 10,75 €/month	Yes	High	Privacy policy; SCC contract; Data Processing Agreement (DPA)	
WebEx Meetings	Limted free version (40 min) Starting from 11 €/month	Yes	High	Privacy policy; SCC contract; Data Processing Agreement (DPA)	
Jitsi	Free Can be hosted on own server	Yes	Depends on the number of particpants	https://jitsi.org/meet-jit-si-privacy/ Since no registration is needed -> no DPA Agreement	no account needed; no polls and breakoutrooms
Google Meet	Free Google Workspace with more functions starting from 5,20 €/month	Yes			Cooperation with Miro Whiteboard; No breakout rooms in free version

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SOFTWARE (2)

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WHAT'S NEEDED?

Technical Eqipment

• **Stable internet connection** (at least 4 Mbit Up- and Download); Test it here: https://www.speedtest.net

• **Computer** (iOS, Windows, Linux), **tablet** or **smartphone** (iOS, Android)

• **Webcam** (if not integrated in the device)

• Built-in **microphone** or **headset**

• Using **WLAN**? Try to be near the hotspot.

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Installing Zoom

- **Download** Zoom here: https://zoom.us/download -> recommended

- Can be used via Browser (ideally Chrome) without downloading the software

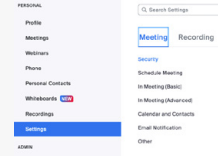- **Register** on https://zoom.us with Google, Facebook or E-Mail

- **Test** Zoom here: http://zoom.us/test

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WORKING WITH ZOOM

Zoom Settings

Ready through the settings in the web portal!

You can basically adapt everything!

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Desktop client

Join a meeting by entering the meeting ID number sent to you by the host
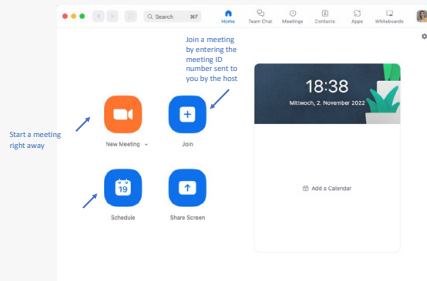
Start a meeting right away

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Join a meeting

2 main ways to join a meeting

1) Use invitation link (recommended)

Click on the link you received from the organizer. This option is the easiest and fastest.

Bianca Baumgartner is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Bianca Baumgartner's Zoom Meeting
Time: Nov 2, 2022 07:00 PM Vienna

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88...

PROMOCITI TTT1 – BARCELONA

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Join a meeting

2 main ways to join a meeting

2) Use the meeting ID

If you have the Zoom desktop client installed, you can also join by clicking on "Join" and entering the meeting ID you received from the organizer.

PROMOCITI TTT1 – BARCELONA
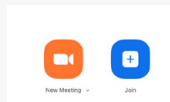
WORKING WITH ZOOM

Scheduling a meeting

Desktop client

Web client
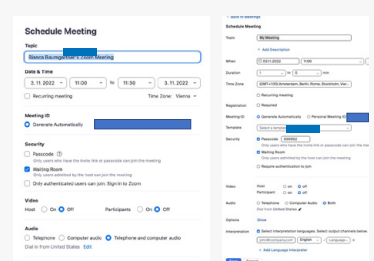
WORKING WITH ZOOM

Save a meeting as template

After a meeting has been scheduled you can save it as a template

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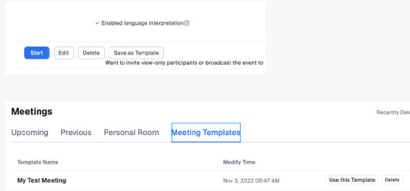
WORKING WITH ZOOM

Menu bar in a meeting

Change the type of view

Open list of participants
Open chat
Share Screen/ Audio
Launch polls
Record meeting
Add subtitle
Create breakout rooms
Open emoji reactions
Start interpretation
Integrate Apps
Open Zoom Whiteboard

Audio: I cannot hear anything!

Try this:

1) When entering the meeting, select „Join with computer audio"

2) Use the menu down below and click on the small arrow next to the microphone symbol ➔ Select the appropriate speaker

---
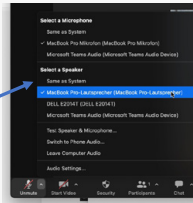
Audio: Can you hear me?

Try this:

1) Your microphone may be muted. Solution: Move the mouse -> a toolbar appears at the bottom -> the microphone icon at the bottom left must not be crossed out in red. Click on "Unmute".
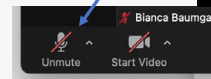
2) Use the menu down below and click on the small arrow next to the microphone symbol ➔ Select the appropriate microphone

---
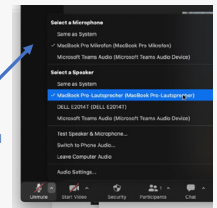
Video: Can you see me?

Try this:

1) The camera may be turned off. Solution:
Move mouse -> a toolbar appears at the bottom toolbar -> the camera icon at the bottom left should not be crossed out in red.
Click on "Start video"
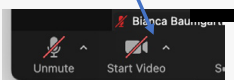
2) The wrong camera may be selected. Solution:
Move mouse -> a toolbar appears at the bottom -> click on arrow-symbol next to the camera -> select another camera

---
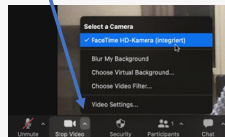
WORKING WITH ZOOM

Updating Zoom

1. open the zoom desktop client
2. click on your profile picture
3. click on "check for updates".

If you do not have the latest version of Zoom, it will now download.

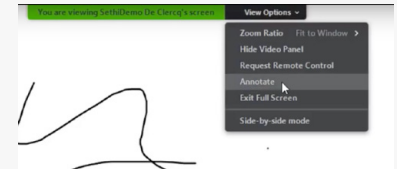**Tipp! Always ask attendees to update their version before entering a meeting!**
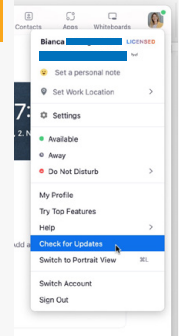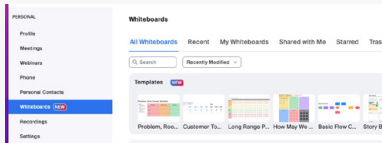
WORKING WITH ZOOM
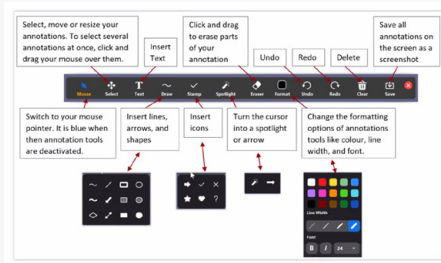
The Whiteboard

WORKING WITH ZOOM

The Whiteboard

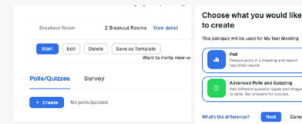## WORKING WITH ZOOM

The Whiteboard

👍 Can be prepared in advance

👍 Check for templates

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Polls/Quizzes/Surveys function

- Can only be created in the Web Portal
- Make sure the polls function is activated in the settings
- Prepare the poll in advance
- Find it at the end of your planned meeting
- Polls/Quizzes → **during** the meeting
- Survey → **after** meeting has ended

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Polls/Quizzes/Surveys function

- Only host can create polls!
- Host and co-host can launch polls -> click the "polls" icon in the menu bar during the meeting
- Polls can be edited during the meeting by host and co-host
- Up to 50 polls per meeting possible
- Host and Co-Host cannot vote
- Polls results will be shown to host and co-host -> can decide whether to share it with attendees or not
- The same poll can be re-launched during the same meeting, but: previous results will be replaced

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Polls/Quizzes/Surveys function

- **Results** of Polls, quizzes and surevey can be found in the Web Portal.
- Adming → Account management → Reports → Meeting
- Results can be downloaded as csv-file

WORKING WITH ZOOM

The subtitle (CC) function

- **Can only be created in the Web Portal**
- Allow the CC function in settings -> In Meeting (Advanced)

OPTIONS FOR CC:
- **Manual** caption: Allow host to type closed captions or assign a participant/3rd-party service to add closed captions
- **Automated** captions: Zoom creates subtitles automatically in the spoken language.

Full transcript: viewing of full transcript in the in-meeting side pane

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WORKING WITH ZOOM

The subtitle (CC) function
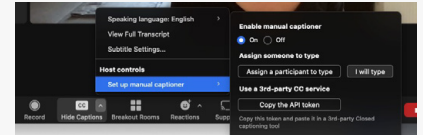
WORKING WITH ZOOM

Language interpretation

= Allow host to assign **participants as interpreters** who can interpret one language into another **in real-time**. Host can assign interpreters **when scheduling or during** the meeting.

Participants will hear the translation with 80 % volume and the original speaker at 20 %

This feature must be enabled when scheduling a meeting or webinar.

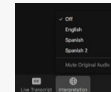Feature cannot be used with Personal Meeting ID (PMI).

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Language interpretation

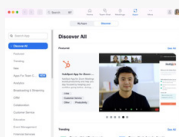This feature must be enabled when scheduling a meeting or webinar:

Start the interpretation with the icon in the meeting menu bar:

WORKING WITH ZOOM

Apps

Go to Zoom App Marketplace via Web or Desktop client

Add it directly from the meeting

Attention: Try before live use! Make sure every user has the latest Zoom version installed!

BEST TRICKS / WORST MISTAKES for Online Meetings

1 Check **Internet quality** in advance
→ Worst mistake: Meeting is over before it started
Check with facility (type of internet eg. Glass fiber, past experiences, back-up plan, etc)

2 Plan for **Set-up Preparating & Testing!**
→ Worst mistake: Let audience wait due to technical issues
Test with a 2nd person – especially with external equipment
Latest version of the software

3 Have an **online moderator**
→ Worst mistake: Online community feels left alone
Have a dedicated person to watch the chat, help with technical issues, mute participants etc.

4 **Re-name devices** if logged in on various devices
→ Worst mistake: Host gets confused about what happens on which device

5 **Know** technical experience of **your online audience**
→ Worst mistake: Ignoring the fact, that not everybody is experienced with meeting software
• Check with the experience level with the registration from
• Send out information for preparetion at least 2 days before meeting

6 Prepare **polls/surveys/whiteboards** in advance
→ Worst mistake: Let people wait while you set up e.g. a poll

7 Prepare **warm-up games** in advance
→ Worst mistake: Jump start into the meeting = no relationship building

8 Prepare **group works or off-screen tasks**
→ Worst mistake: no usage of different tools and methods

9 **Do breaks!**
→ Worst mistake: No time for participants to fulfill basic needs
• Announce breaks in advance
• Consider: onliners might need more breaks
• Add breaks to group works (= reducing number of interruptions)

10 Don't forget: **People are listening**
→ Worst mistake: Keep on-site mic switched on in breaks and transfer private conversations.

11 **Welcome mistakes and failures**
→ Learning opportunity!

12 **Practice, practice, practice!**

WARM UP GAMES

GAMES

Zoom Games

Whiteboard templates include some nice warm up games

👍 Easy preparation

👍 Easy for attendees to understand

Where are you from?

Speed Dating

Host randomly sends attendees to breakout rooms for e.g. 5 minutes to chat and connect.

👍 No need for preparation

👍 Easy for attendees to unterstand

👍 Ideal to benefit of „check-in time". while waiting for more people to log in

---

Post-it Game

1) Everybody **covers the camera** with a post it.

2) Moderator asks a **question** e.g.:
• „Who had a good sleep last night?"
• „Who has open questions?"
• „Who has a hangover ☺?"

3) For whom this applies **remove the post** it from the camera.

→Later on, everybody can ask a question.

Post-it Game

👍 No need for major preparation → inform particpants in advance to have something ready to cover the camera

👍 Easy for attendees to unterstand

👍 Variation: „I never ever..."

Color game

1. Everybody switches camera on
2. Host says a color e.g. blue
3. Everybody has to find something blue and show it to the others
4. The person who's last says the next color.

👍 No need for preparation

👍 Easy for attendees to unterstand

Checkin.daresay.io

Name a song that you absolutely hate, but you're not sure why you hate it.

filters

DARESAY

👍 No need for preparation

👍 Easy for attendees to unterstand

⚠ Questions may not be suitable

Wheel of names

👍 Needs to be prepared in advance
Host can spin the wheel and screen share

⚠ Better for smaller groups

QUICKIES (FAST, FREE & EASY)

→ No login, no preparation – just open it and use it

🔗	Entrance/ Introduction	http://tscheck.in https://checkin.daresin.io	Icebreaker Questions/Entrance and Finishing Questions
🔗	Entrance/ Introductio/ As needed	https://wheelofnames.com	Random selection of a names
🔗	As needed	https://www.agilepokerclock.com/clock	Workshop Stop Watch (works best with Chrome)
🔗	Entrance/ As needed	https://codepen.io/thibpat/full/bGNqVRP	Make a custom GIF of yourself with your webcam
🔗	As needed	https://yopad.eu	Etherpad

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TOOLS, TOOLS, TOOLS

PADLET

🖼	USE	Ideal to collect, visualize and compare content. Also contents can easily be structured.
→	REGISTRATION	Host: Registration via E-Mail, Google, Apple or Microsoft. Guests: no registration necessary for use
💰	COSTS	Up to 3 Padlets in parallel for free. Unlimited padlets for 14,99 USD per month or 149,99 USD per year. Different plans for private people, teams and schools available.
⚠	DATA PROTECTION	Padlet is a US-american tool and complies with the EU-US Privacy Shield Framework. Since no registration from guest users is necessary, this helps to protect data.
🔗	WEBSITE	https://en.padlet.com/

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MURAL

🖼	USE	Mural is an infinite, flexible, interactive and virtual whiteboard for real-time collaboration. Notes, objects, pictures, videos and links can be inserted as required. It is also possible to write directly on the canvases. There are a large number of templates that support, for example, the collection of ideas and the drawing of mind maps.
→	REGISTRATION	Host: Registration via E-Mail Guests: No registration necessary
💰	COSTS	Up to 3 Murals in parallel for free, open boards only, guests cannot edit. Unlimited murals starting from 12 USD per month or 120 USD per year. **Free account for teachers, students and non-profits possible.**
⚠	DATA PROTECTION	Mural is distributed by Tactivos Inc, based in the USA and complies with the EU-US Privacy Shield Framework. All project data is stored in a cloud in the United States, including the personal data left behind when logging in.
🔗	WEBSITE	https://www.mural.co/ https://www.mural.co/education/educator-workspace

PROMOCITI TTT1 – BARCELONA

MIRO

🖼	USE	Miro is an infinite, flexible, interactive and virtual whiteboard for real-time collaboration. Best use with Chrome and Firefox. Alternative to Mural.
→	REGISTRATION	Host: Registration via E-Mail, Google, Apple, Facebook, Slack or Microsoft. Guests: No registration needed
💰	COSTS	Up to 3 Whiteboards in parallel for free with basic features. Unlimited padlets with extended features starting from 10 USD per month or 96 USD per year. **Free account to staff members and students of educational institutions.**
⚠	DATA PROTECTION	Miro is a US-american tool. It maintains production data within the EU (Ireland) and US (Virginia). All data transfers conform to GDPR requirements. Offers different security levels depending on the pricing plan model. It is subject to the CLOUD Act.
🔗	WEBSITE	https://miro.com/

GOOGLE JAMBOARD

🖼	USE	Jamboard is a digital whiteboard that lets you collaborate in real time using either the Jamboard device (a 55-inch digital whiteboard that works with G Suite services), web browser or mobile app. Pro: Free alternative to Mural and Miro. Cons: Lacks ability to add media content such as music and videos.
→	REGISTRATION	Host: Registration via Google Guests: no registration needed
💰	COSTS	FREE – Comes with your Google Account as part of the Google Workspace.
⚠	DATA PROTECTION	Google is a US-american company. It commits to comply with the GDPR with respect to the processing of personal data of customers in all Google Cloud and Google Workspace services.
🔗	WEBSITE	https://jamboard.google.com/

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MENTIMETER

	USE	Mentimeter is an anonymous tool for real-time feedback and brainstorming during a meeting/presentation. It offers different designs (ranking, word cloud, quiz). It's simple in use.
	REGISTRATION	Host: Registration via E-Mail, Google or Facebook Guests: no registration needed
	COSTS	Limited free plan for 2 question slides and 5 quizes Unlimited use starting from 12 USD/month.
	DATA PROTECTION	The Swedish company hosts its service on a US-based Server.
	WEBSITE	https://www.mentimeter.com

Our TIPP

- **Less is more!**
  Do not use too many different tools during a meeting

- Good **combination**:
  - 1 (paid) preferred video confernce software
  - 1-2 paid tool(s) e.g. Padlet
  - 1 free tool as supplement

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The sources and references utilized for this publication have been compiled diligently and conscientiously. However, despite our best efforts, errors may occur inadvertently. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and kindly encourage you to contact us if necessary at the following address: office@arge-bildungshaeuser.at

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