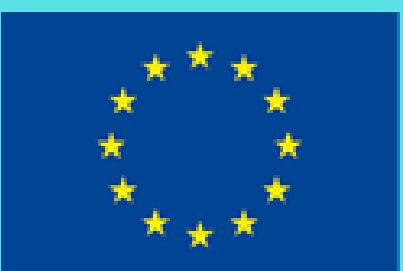


Steps 4 Local Engagement and Democracy - STEP4LEAD project



How to become a community leader



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About the Project

Project Title: Steps 4 Local Engagement and Democracy -
STEPs4LEAD

Project Reference Number: 602729-EPP-1-2018-1-BG-
EPPKA2-CBY-ACPALA

Coordinating Organisation: INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR
COOPERATION (Bulgaria)

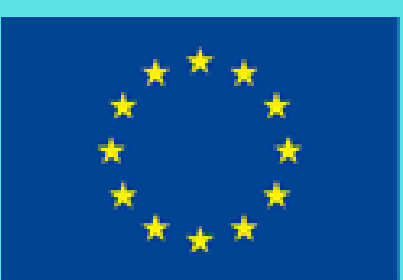
The project idea was to empower youngsters from India, Indonesia, The Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal and Vietnam from Asia and Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Italy and North Macedonia to become active actors in their local communities and to enrich their skills and abilities in policy making, decision taking, lobbying and advocacy, conflict resolution, active civic participation, strategic planning and management.

The project was implemented in 5 phases:

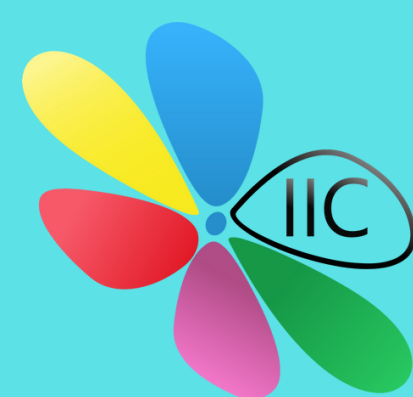
I Phase: International trainings. A series of 2 international trainings were held in Vietnam and Nepal covering the above-mentioned topics of the project and each one followed by an online consultation meeting with the participants.

II Phase: Job shadowing. Three job shadowers from European countries were sent for 3 weeks in three different organization in Asia, from the partners consortium where they exchanged knowledge and experienced the process of civic engagement in all level of social life.

III Phase: Consultation meetings. The consultation process with the participants in the trainings and the job shadowing will be continued as at least 3 consultation online meetings will be held with each country team allowing the update and revision of their action plans, helping them plan and organise the local trainings and the implementation of at least one local community project.



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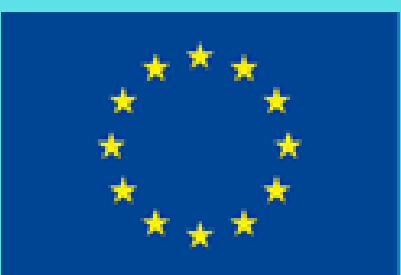


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IV Phase: National trainings and community actions. After taking part in the first 3 phases each country CYCL organized a national training for its members to build their capacity on topics of importance for the community development subject to the current project.

V Phase: International CYCL Platform, the platform was held in Bansko, Bulgaria.



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Chapter I

Active participation

Recently there is an emerging shift from a more passive to a more participating and powersharing approach when it comes to participation in social life. Excluded groups have their outstanding role for the sustainable societal development by actively participating in the decision making processes, by sharing and contributing with new, inspiring ideas, by being the incentive for social change. Participation is valued as a human right and it plays a crucial role in maintaining democratic principles and is key to personal development.

Communities seeking to empower themselves can build active citizens' participation by welcoming it, creating valuable roles for each person to play, actively reaching out to build inclusive participation, and creating and supporting meaningful social opportunities. Active citizens' participation develops true democratic processes and moreover it leads to higher rates of resource acquisition and use, better results, higher levels of volunteerism and a brighter community spirit.

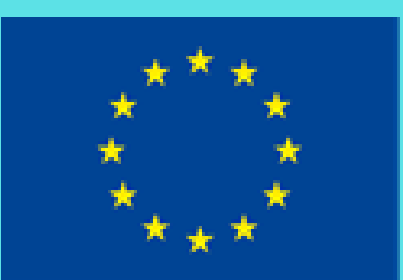
Levels of active participation

Several levels of active participation can be distinguished based on the impact scale of the demand-and-benefit driven results.

First level: Myself

At that level my participation is driven by personal demands to solve problems and achieve gains while exerting my individual civil rights. My personal gain is the focus of my efforts.

Every person has the right to be an active citizen. Active participation is the soul of an empowered community.



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Second level: Myself and my group

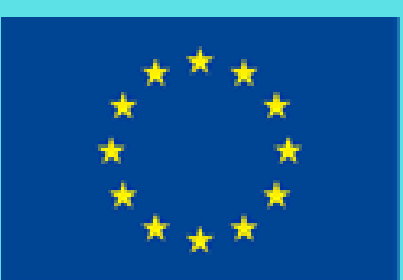
At the second level my participation affects not only my life but the life of an extended social group. While standing for my rights, I am concerned and also stand for the rights of the group that I represent and belong to. My achievements are beneficial both for me and my fellows

Third level: Myself, my group and the community

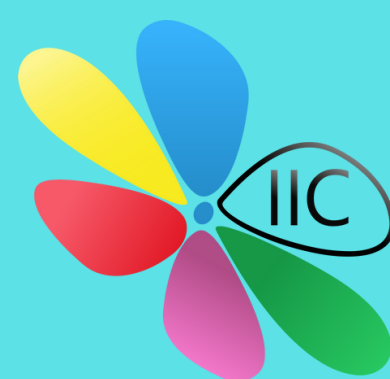
I am driven by totally philanthropic and idealistic incentive to support and encourage the social development of my community. I have social responsibility towards the community that I work and live in. I address current issues of social injustice, propose solutions and create opportunities and benefits by taking an active role in community processes. I am more concerned about the further social impact of my efforts than the impact that it will have on my personal life. At that stage very often I am the social innovator who suggests new patterns of social behavior.

What are the principles of active participation?

Active community participation is key to building an empowered community. It is also crucial to achieving community success. In addition, participating communities achieve greater citizens' satisfaction with their community. What does a participating community look like? While it varies from one place to another, there are several characteristics that participating communities share. The truth is that there is no one right way to achieve deep community involvement, it looks different and obeys different rules in every community. Yet there are some common elements to sound participation that can be found in all communities.



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It requires the involvement of many people.

In participating communities many people are involved in the activities of the community. Community is not simply run by an elite leadership, but it is the work and the achievement of all its members.

It is many centered and multisectoral.

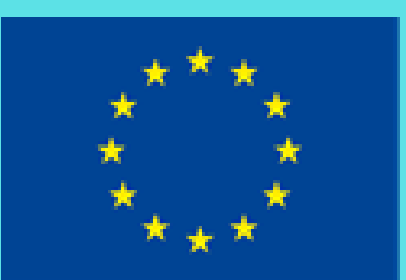
Participating communities are open to involvement by all groups and responsibilities are divided in a way to best show and promote their skills, talents and capacities. Power and responsibility are decentralised. Participating communities have many centers of activity and community action engages the natural enthusiasm of its citizens.

It is open and well informed.

Participating communities conduct their activities openly and spread information about them widely. Citizens are well informed about the events done in the community and about their opportunities for personal involvement in meaningful roles.

It welcomes fresh and innovative ideas.

In participating communities there is no such thing as a bad idea. All ideas are treated with respect and welcomed as a source of inspirations with potential value for the entire community. Participating communities encourage citizens to offer their best and contribute to the common well-being.



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It is inclusive, diverse and reaches out to all community groups.

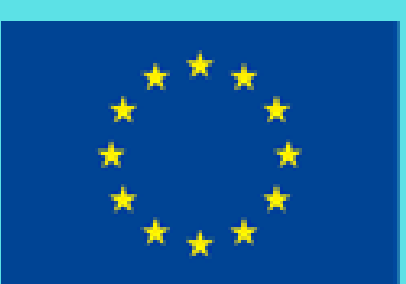
Participating communities make no distinctions among various groups and types of personalities who offer support and contribute to the community development. All persons are warmly welcomed regardless of color, age, race, prior community involvement, level of education, occupation, personal reputation, disadvantages, religion, or any other factor. Furthermore, participating communities do not sit passively, waiting for a diverse group of citizens to present themselves. They actively reach out to all citizens to encourage their participation.

It is open-minded and transparent.

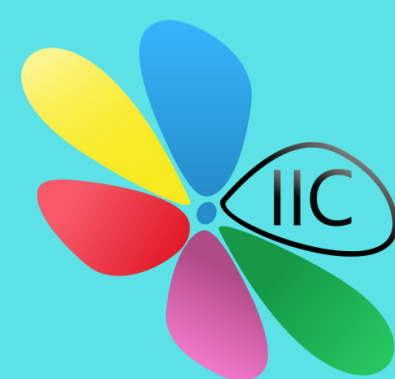
Participating communities operate openly and with an open mind. They are not controlled by any single organisation, group or philosophy and they facilitate the discussion of a diversity of viewpoints, rather than push its own agenda. Participating communities are not ego-driven but focused on operating a high-quality, open decision-making and participatory process.

How do we build active participation?

It's widely believed that any group of people have the power to change the world. But before that, they need to be motivated to become active citizens. How can they be inspired? How can they take an active role their communities? What are the tools and approaches that we can use? Those matters need to be addressed and profoundly considered by nowadays society



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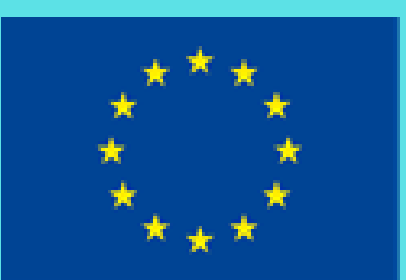


Welcome it

The most important action you can take to encourage citizens' participation is to welcome it. People know when they are welcome, and when they are not. Welcoming participation means more than behaving friendly. It requires opening the process to newcomers and inviting their active participation.

Some actions that can help are:

- Provide them training and support to get them equipped with skills and information necessary to address local realities and needs.
- Offer young people opportunities for educational and professional development.
- Be glad for the opportunity for new contributions, despite any resentment that you might feel that they were not present to help with already completed tasks.
- Explain where things stand, so participants can fit into the process easily.
- Offer a variety of opportunities, so newcomers can find roles that best fit their interests and skills and ways they wish to engage.
- Make participation voluntary and show respect and appreciation to young people's efforts, knowledge, skills and competences.
- Value newcomers' input, take their ideas seriously, even when they represent viewpoints that have previously been considered and rejected. Be patient.
- Create safe, supportive and conformable environment where people can create and express themselves freely.
- Ensure transparent, non-discriminatory participation of young people.
- Create relationships based on mutual trust and respect.
- Don't leave them out by making decisions among the old members.



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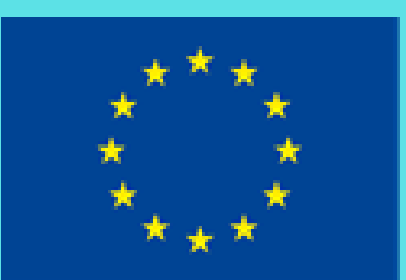
Create Real Roles

Nobody wants to stand on the sideline. Each of us wants to play a position in the game. This is as true for newcomers as for those who have been participating for some time.

In every community there is more than enough work to keep people busy and involved.

- Assign new participants something that gives them a sense of meaningful involvement and helps them understand that their contribution - no matter how small - advances the overall effort.
- Hold them accountable for their results. This is an excellent way to help them see their contribution to the strategic plan and it also assures their work has focus and value.
- Expand their roles as time goes to take full benefit from their willingness to contribute. At first newcomers' duties may not carry much responsibility, while they are learning.
- Focus attention on the community rather than the individual personality as it might feel.

threatening for old members to give responsibilities to someone new. But fresh ideas are the lifeblood of a vital community, and additional hands can help renew the strength of those who have carried out the loads of work in the past.



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Reach Out

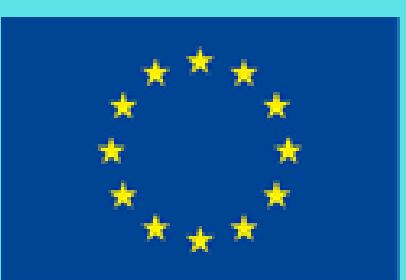
Because of past discrimination, or just because of the belief that community development is someone else's job, citizens may be reluctant to step forward. This is especially true for members of socially excluded groups historically left out of community affairs and for groups that have newly arrived. To achieve the broadbased participation that is essential to building a true community, you need to reach out and access all community groups.

- Promote and provide information about the activities in all media channels – social and mass media – that have proven to be effective and are a source of reliable information for your community.

- Making presentations at meetings which you initiate or participate in.

- Have direct contacts with the members of your community, spread the word of mouth about what you do and try to achieve for community development. The most effective techniques involve direct, personal contacts.

- Seek and enjoy diversity – ensure the participation of people from a wide range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds.



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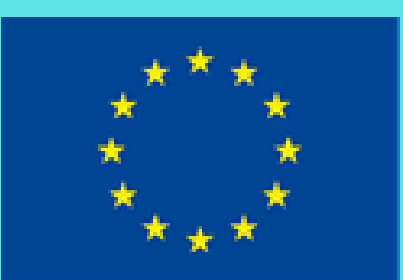


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Get Ready

Turning toward an open, participative community process is not an easy thing to do. It means introducing ways of working that you may not be familiar and comfortable with. It means inviting new and challenging ideas into to be discussed and considered. It means working closely with unfamiliar people with whom you may feel you have little in common, or who make you uncomfortable. It means accepting the fact that the outcomes you anticipate may not be the ones that eventually occur. It means tolerating a more difficult decision-making process until new groups are fully accepted and have fully adjusted, and new working methods are established. For some well-grounded actors it also means giving up a cherished personal or social role, in favor of others whose right to share resources and contribute must be acknowledged. As your community makes this transition and as individuals change their own perspectives about community-wide participation, they are also left with the feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment and feel the sense of ownership and belonging to their own community. However, the more important reason for community involvement is to build a true community in the place you live and work. And it is to make that community a better place for all who belong to it.



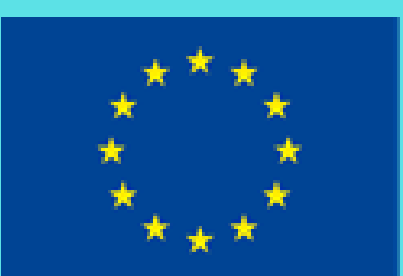
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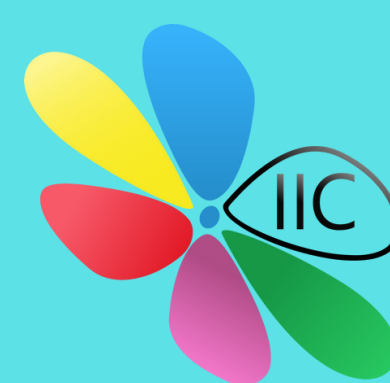
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“Active participation brings a deep sense of joy that comes from knowing you are a valuable part of something beautiful that is larger than all of you - a living community.”



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Chapter II

Leadership Development

Youth development is an unconditional posture for nation building as the strength of future development of a nation depends solely upon it. The future of any country is always predicated on its present youth productive force. A society with an inefficient and irresponsible youth force is not far from an abyss of serious irreparable damage. It is obvious that youth constitute the true wealth and the future of the country, addressing their hopes and aspirations must therefore be an integral part of socio-economic development. However, there is an absence of universally agreed operational definition and nuances of the term 'youth' which vary from country to country depending on the specific socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factor.

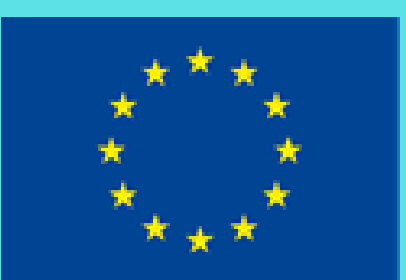
There is a general practice that youth's rights should be judged from three key areas of Provision, Protection, and participation, often described as the three Ps.

Provision of the basic needs of a youth to develop (e.g. love and care, shelter, clothing, food, access to health, reproductive health, and education systems, water and sanitation)

Protection from all from of abuse and exploitation (e.g. physical and mental abuse, sexual abuse, inhuman and degrading punishment, hazardous labour, slavery, armed conflict, prostitution, torture, trafficking, land mines, pollution, ethnic and other forms of discrimination)

Participation: The right of the youth to take part in all decisions concerning the development of the youth and the youth's status as an independent human being and citizen. The youth is regarded as an active participant in matters concerning the youth, rather than a passive recipient.

Similarly, the Three Rs (Rights, Respect and Responsibilities) are core values that guide the work of Youth and has to reflect it in a society.



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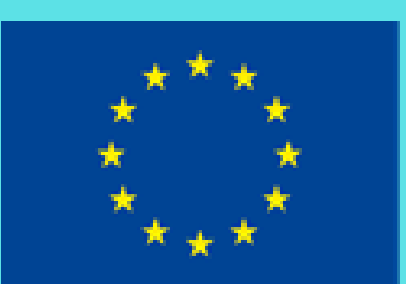


RIGHTS: Youth have rights to accurate and complete information to secure stake in the future.

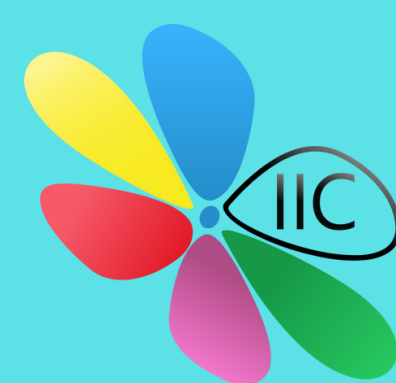
RESPECT: Youth deserve respect. Today, young people are largely perceived as part of the problem. Valuing young people means they are part of the solution and participate in developing programs and policies that affect their well-being.

RESPONSIBILITY: Society has the responsibility to provide young people with the tools they need to safeguard themselves with full confidence.

In substance, it is very much common that youth community like every citizen of the country have the right to meet all the basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, and education, health care. Based upon their competencies, capabilities and skills, the youth should have employment opportunity at home and abroad including self-employment. The youth should have opportunity to spend rest and recreation and leisure under reasonable circumstances. The youth should have the right of social security, that is to say, the public assistance in cases of undesired want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widowhood or orphanage or other such cases. The youth should have the right to work as representatives in decision making process regarding youth affairs.



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What qualities one community leader should have?

Self-Awareness: Before leading others, you must know your own abilities.

Eagerness to Learn: Studying different perspectives and angles of a situation will ensure you to make great decisions that positively impact your whole team.



Empathy: Empathy allows you to understand everybody's differing situations.

Honesty: Great leaders MUST be trustworthy, and the first step is proven honesty.

Dedication: The responsibility of a community leader takes a lot of time and responsibility.

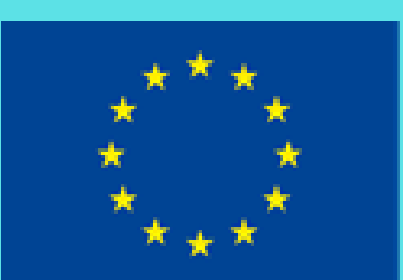
Service: Community service is not only important to the structure of a happy, healthy community, but it also keeps your role in perspective.

Interpersonal Skills: Leaders must have the ability to have meaningful conversations among all kinds of people.

Forward-Thinking: Great leaders step outside the box and have set goals in mind for the future.

Intelligence: This comes in all forms-- such as emotional, social, and intellectual intelligence.

Motivation: Being motivational is extremely contagious, and will spark your team to stay productive.



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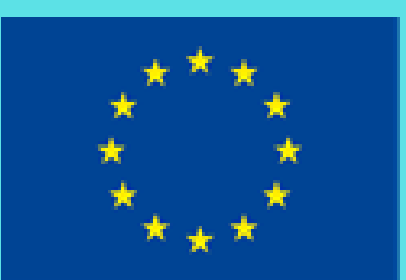
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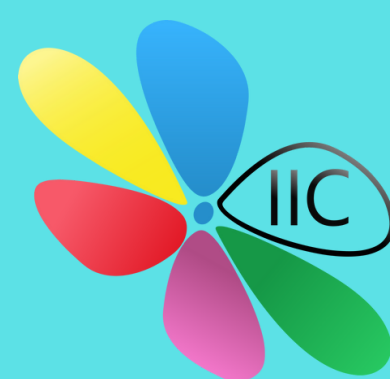
SHORT PRATICAL TIPS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

- Creating conditions for an interactive dialogue: creating forums for asking about the young's expectations and projects; considering their opinions and suggestions for improve social and economic resources. Create a space to share different experiences, to constructing a real communication and to fight barriers.
- Giving prominence to personal qualities and skills: building spaces (in the school or in others sites) to explore and share different cultures and know-ledges; working with the multiples expressions of yourself (artistic, manual, intellectual, sportive, etc.).
- Implicating the young people in the social, political and cultural programs: give them access to the local projects and initiatives; developing their sensibility about the political participation.
- Creating the opportunity for mobility and exchanges in the other countries: giving prominence to growth of their knowledge and experience.

“Community Leadership is all about the welfare of the people they represent.”



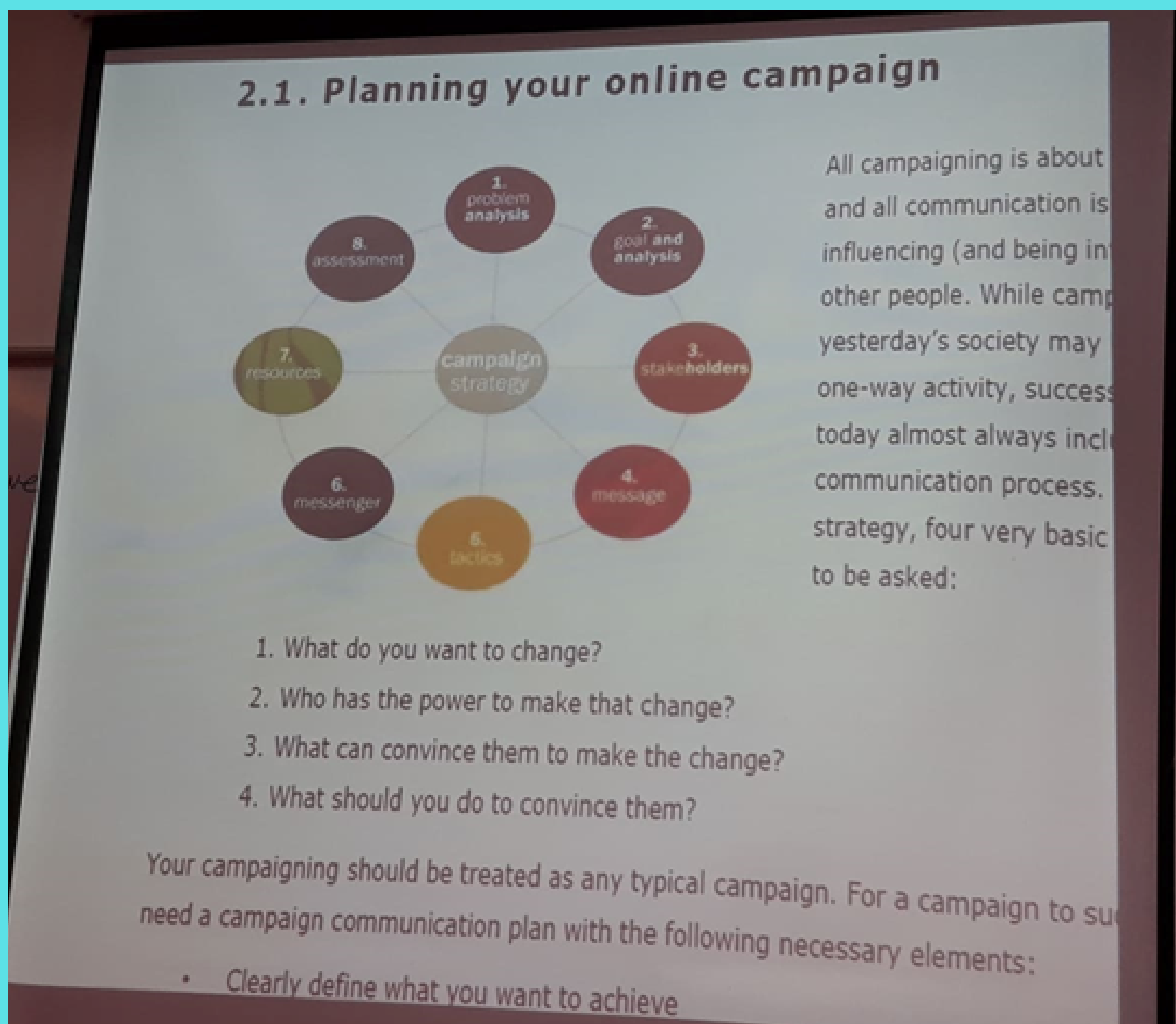
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Chapter III

Campaign strategy



Strategising and planning your activism/ Campaigning

In many cases, the use of tools is not linked to the overall aims and objectives of the organisation, especially the change that they intend to see happening in their communities. Often the change and how they will reach that point – meaning the strategy – are not even clearly defined.



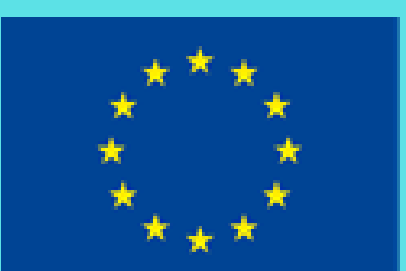
“What is a campaign strategy? A campaign can be seen as an organised, purposeful effort to create change, and it should be guided by thoughtful planning. Before taking action, successful campaigners learn as much as possible about:

- Who is affected by the campaign issue both positively and negatively
- What changes could improve the situation
- What resources, tactics and tools are available to implement a campaign that will address the issue.

The existing situation



“Campaigners use this knowledge to create their strategy, which guides them in planning, implementing, marketing, monitoring, improving and evaluating their campaign.”



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All campaigning is about communicating and all communication is about influencing (and being influenced by) other people. While campaigning in yesterday's society may have been a one-way activity, successful campaigning today almost always includes a two-way communication process. In building a strategy, four very basic questions need to be asked:



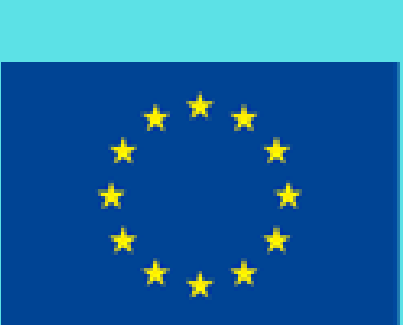
1. What do you want to change?
2. Who has the power to make that change?
3. What can convince them to make the change?
4. What should you do to convince them?

Your campaigning should be treated as any typical campaign. For a campaign to succeed, you need a campaign communication plan with the following necessary elements:

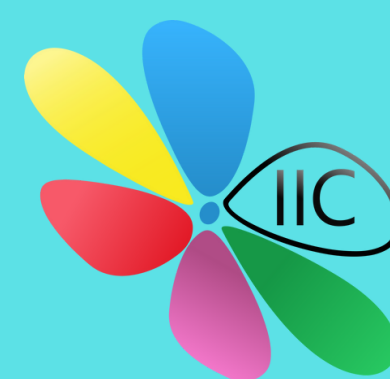
- Clearly define what you want to achieve
- Know who your audiences are. Who do you want to influence? Why? How much power do they have to help you achieve the change that you want to happen?
- Be very clear in your message
- Be very creative and innovative when you choose the channels and tools to communicate your message.

A communication plan in a campaign is important because it will:

- Guide how you will implement your campaign
- Make it easier for you to track your campaign performance
- Make it easier for you to make changes to your campaign
- Give you a picture of the different ways or tools to communicate your campaign.



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2.1.1 . The campaign communication template

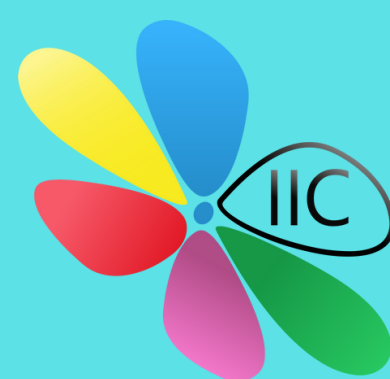
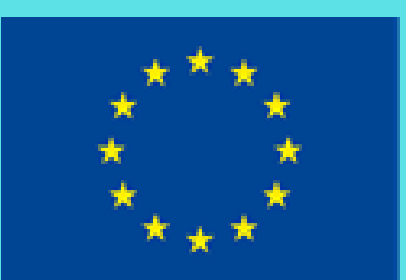
To start planning your campaign, we recommend using a communication template. This will help you answer some important questions about your campaign. This will also guide you to design your online campaign.

Here are some basic elements of a campaign communication template:

1. Clearly define what you want to achieve by having a clear set of goals and objectives

The campaign goal is the “big” change that you want to achieve over a relatively longer period of time and usually described in very ambitious language. A campaign may have one or several goals depending on the scale and magnitude of your campaign. If you have more than one goal make sure that they are related.

Many organisations nowadays are already very familiar with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) objectives. For example, the objective is very specific about what it wants to achieve, measurable (x number of people impacted), achievable and realistic (if based on an assessment by the group), and time-bound (in one year’s time).





2. Knowing who your audiences are

Campaign audiences can be categorised either as “**decision makers**” or “**opinion or influence formers**”.

Decision makers are people who have the formal mandate and power to enact the change that you want to achieve. These could be elected officials or appointed officials in the government or non-state actors such as religious or community leaders (in situations where the state has relegated certain functions to regulate and implement laws according to customs or religion), or leaders of an armed rebel group in situations where formal government functions no longer exist.

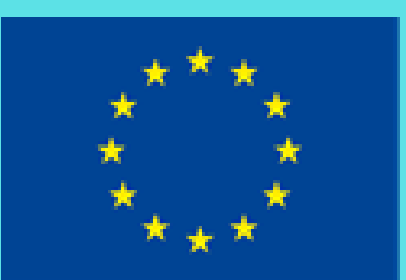
An example of a campaign goal is:

“End violence against women and girls in the name of ‘culture’ in country x or in the province of xxxx.”

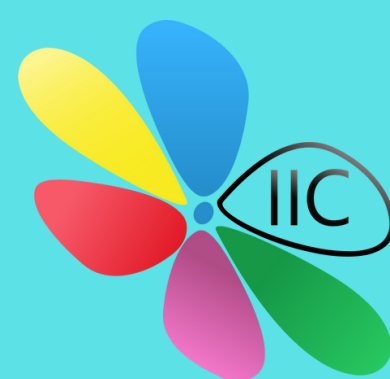
A campaign goal is usually broken down into smaller parts that can be shorter-term campaigns or actions or activities to achieve your short-termed objectives.

An example of a shorter-termed campaign objective under the goal above could be:

“In one year’s time, X number of village and religious leaders in xxxx will sign a covenant that they will not condone the misinterpretation of religious text to justify cruel punishment against women



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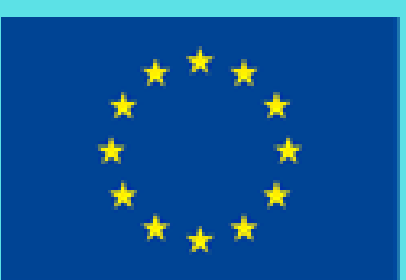


Opinion or influence formers are individuals or groups who may have no formal authority or power but are nonetheless influential. These could be your allies or your adversaries – people or institutions who are opposed to your agenda because it conflicts with their interests. Your campaign plan has to reflect who are the decision makers and the opinion/influence formers you want to reach, and who you aim to reach first and later. In order to reach a particular decision maker you may have to work through an influential person or institution first. Or you may have to reach both the decision-makers and the influential but adversarial groups around them at the same time. It is very important to note that those who will benefit from your campaign, can also become a very influential campaign voice. Always include in your campaign plan how to build their capacities and enable them to become an important part of your campaign.

3. Be very clear in your message

Your campaign communication plan needs to formulate very explicitly what your **key messages** are. These messages must be distinct, clear, succinct and explicit and are directly linked to your goals and objectives. They should contain the following:

- What is the problem?
- What solution are you proposing?
- What action do you want your allies and targets to take?





4. Be very creative and innovative when you choose the channels and tools to communicate your message

When campaigners want to influence a decision maker, they have basically two options:

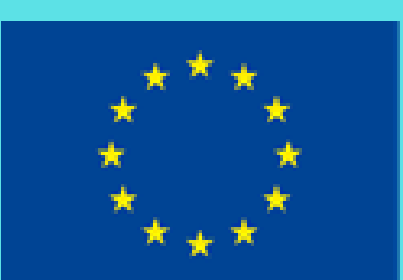
Direct influence An example of this is lobbying with authorities

Indirect influence Where one turns to a part of the “public” to gain support for one’s case, as in alliance building and public-opinion building.

The channels and tools to communicate your campaign agenda and objectives can take the form of real or face-to-face activities, or virtual activities, through the internet.

When you select the forms or channels to communicate your campaign it is important to consider the following questions:

- What tools/channels are accessible and available to you and your allies?
- What tools/channels will reach your priority audiences?
- What tools/channels will widen the reach of your campaign?



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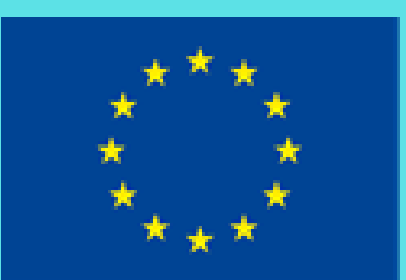
Chapter IV

Campaigning and the media officer

When it comes to conducting a campaign, regardless of its kind and lifecycle stage, the work and devotion of the media officer is of crucial importance. The media officer has a key role, as it is her/his work to schedule, coordinate, specify and work with the different partners, collaborators, sponsors and suppliers, in the name of the best performance of the campaign.

The media officer's job may include:

- designing media communication and positioning strategies;
- preparing press releases and providing other sorts of information to →
- the media and the relevant stakeholders;
- permanent contacts with the media;
- permanent contacts with collaborators, supporters and the general →
- public;
- permanent contacts with donors and sponsors;
- daily work on the organization's website, composing and distribution → →
- of a newsletter, overall online presence of the NGO;
- coordination and creative work on preparing communication materi-
- → als – flyers, posters, etc.;



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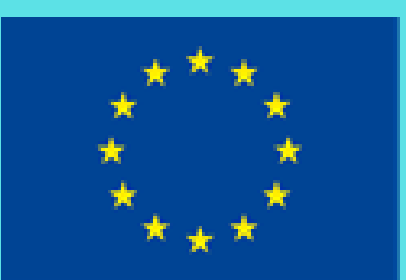
- organizing media events;
- organizing events oriented to other target audiences;
- organizing and carrying out of integral campaigns.

During large-scale and intensive campaigns, it is especially important for the media officer to attract and build a solid team of collaborators, by assigning, delegating different types of tasks to different people. If there is a possibility to build a team, here are the different roles and responsibilities that can be shared:

Online media. Because of their specifics, it is advisable to have a designated person to take care of your website, the relations with online media, your Facebook, Youtube and other online presences. In the intensive periods of a campaign, working with the online media can completely occupy the working days of the person in charge. It is desirable that this person is experienced in online environments, e.g. a blogger or student in public relations or mass communications.

Offline media. This is a job for a more experienced person who is well acquainted with the offline media and has established contacts with these. In certain cases, work with both online and offline media can be delegated to a single person.

Coordinating an event. The event manager needs to have a different set of skills – for working with people, rather than with a computer. It is her/his responsibility to keep track of the activities of different teams of suppliers, contributors, volunteers. During the very event, it is advisable that the event manager involve other people and prepare a list of their particular tasks and responsibilities, so that the event runs smoothly and safely.





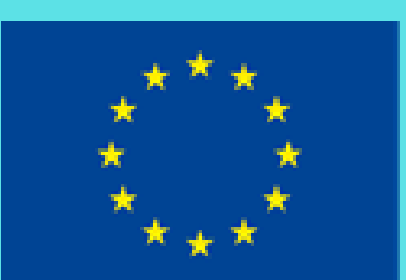
Working with sponsors. Traditionally, working with sponsors is quite different, as it requires another approach and communication. That is often handled by, a particularly designated person or team. This work includes preparing sponsorship packages, submitting them to certain potentially interested companies, organizing meetings and negotiations, tracking payments and execution of the undertaken engagements. In the end of the day, it also includes sending letters of thanks and reports for the work done and the results achieved

Useful tips for the media officer:

Why. Before the start of any campaign or work on a certain cause or event, you should be aware why you are undertaking that. Your personal motivation is of crucial importance for the ultimate success of your organization.

When. Precisely select the timing for carrying out your campaign. Make sure to take into consideration the presence or absence of national and religious holidays, school vacations. Seasonality is important for the success of your campaign.

How long. How long should your campaign last, in order to produce the necessary impact and reach people effectively without satiety and boredom. There is no single answer, but in any case, try to fit into a period from two weeks to two months.



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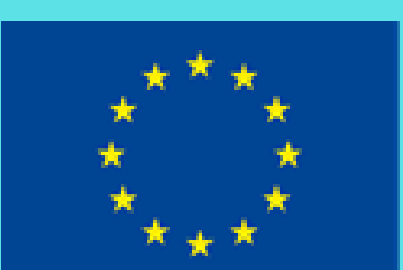
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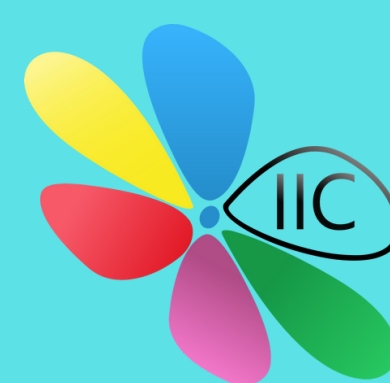
Who. Obviously, there is quite a lot of work to be done when organizing a campaign or an event. An important objective of yours is to involve the right stakeholders, devotees and partners, in order to achieve your goals with ease. Enthusiasm is contagious, make use of it.

What. Devise the action plan. Elaborate on all tasks in their finest details. Assign a person in charge and an executor for each task. Revise and update the list of tasks on a weekly basis. This will warrant the attainment of the set goals/ the goals set.

Where. Carefully choose the location of your campaign or event. Consider the potential number of expected attendants. It is risky either to reserve a hall that is too small, or to opt for a way too big square if there is a possibility that only few people would come. Derive an extra benefit for your event by situating it at a place with a natural stream of people, near media offices or other public places.



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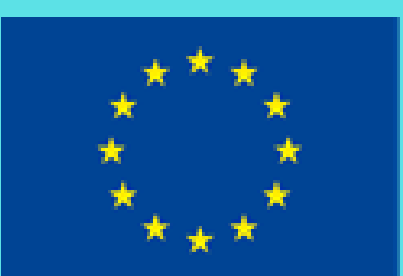
What is needed to be an efficient media officer:

- Excellent communicative skills, both oral and written;
- Excellent research skills and ability to find the novelties;
- High level of networking and conversation skills;
- Foreign languages – at least, English;
- A driving license is an advantage;

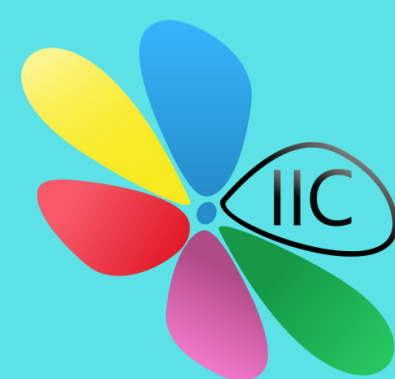
Bachelor or master degree in Journalism, Public Relations or Mass →
→

Communications;

→→ One- or two-year experience in media or PR is also an advantage



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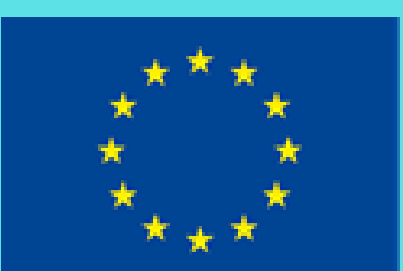
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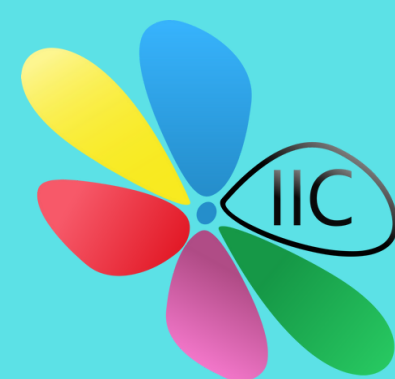
Chapter V

Digital activism

Digital activism, also known as cyberactivism, form of activism that uses the internet and digital media as key platforms for mass mobilization and political action. From the early experiments of the 1980s to the modern “smart mobs” and blogs, activists and computer specialists have approached digital networks as a channel for action. Initially, online activists used the Internet as a medium for information distribution, given its capacity to reach massive audiences across borders instantaneously. (Ref. Britanica)



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Why is digital activism good for using in NGO work?

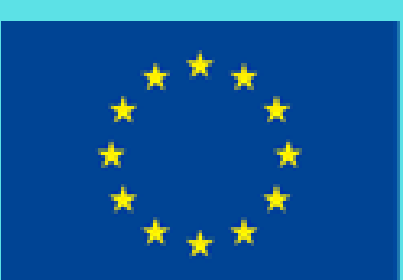
Beyond getting the message out there, digital activism allows anyone with access to the digital world a platform to make their case and call for change and it can be particularly beneficial to those who are often silenced or have no vehicle for their message.

Which are the digital activism channels and tools?

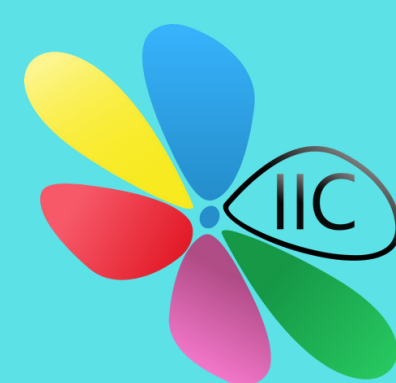
Websites, platforms, social media, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-mails, skype meetings, blogs, vlogs, digital fundraising, massive text messaging, online petitions, digital influencing through social media, mobile apps, webinars, podcast, movies and documentaries, Jingles/short advertisement videos, electronic build-board.

Management of online tools and channels

This was an overview of some of the major tools for online communication. We can add to these sending emails and all other forms of online contacts that we deem relevant to our activities. The main question that arises at this point is who is going to be in charge with all of them. How shall we manage all of our online sites in order to have them sound adequately and work well for us.



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How often? The first question to answer before you decide to launch your own blog, Facebook group or Twitter account, is how often you would write there and what. Many organizations feel worried that they have too little to share. The truth is that sharing is a must. The time of doing the bare minimum with updating the website's news section twice

a year has gone beyond recall. There is always what to share, as long as you are ready to do so.

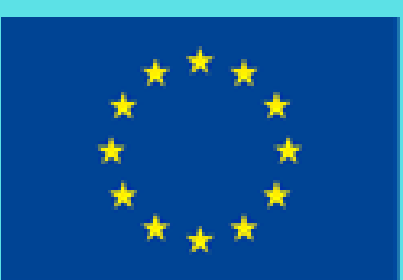
The blog – do post at least 3-4 times a →→ month, or twice a week if possible.

The social networks – record at least 2-3 weekly activities, or every → → day, if possible.

Twitter – during events tweet several times a day, or 3-5 times a → → week in general.

The Youtube channel – upload something fresh at least once a → → month.

What? Just think of it. Everything ranging from interesting team news to new projects and awards, or just a friendly email from a follower, can be a nice occasion for posting in your blog. Similar information is worth adding to your pages in the social networks, but well-enriched with photos and video; and summarized in brief – in your microblog. Of course, make sure you upload video content, as well as photos – many photos.



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How to alternate the channels? Do not be afraid to place just a link to your blog in Twitter or on your organization's fan page in Facebook. It is important, though, that link sharing is not your only contribution to your online identities. Try to alternate your Web 2.0 presences and regularly attend all your online sites.

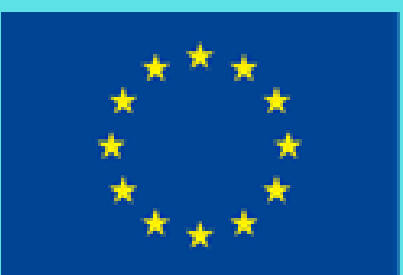
How to integrate them? It is obligatory to integrate all your online activities at a single place, and the most natural place is your official organizational website or blog. At some relatively less active place in the website, add links to all your virtual identities.

Who shall be in charge? If your organization is small, then the tasks related to the Web 2.0 presence are usually performed by the project leader. It is a good idea to involve other team members as well, and assign tasks to those who are most familiar with the respective media and most eager to indulge in it. If you command the services of a team of volunteers, it is quite a natural decision to delegate this task to them.

And why? With the right planning and implementation, the whole juggling with the Web 2.0 tools can help the lasting online positioning of every organization, add value to its image, warrant high search engine ranking, and – what is increasingly important – well protected online reputation.

Key factors of success

Several basic rules determine the success of our online presence and all these efforts: persistence,
→→ positive attitude,
→→ proactivity,
→→ originality.



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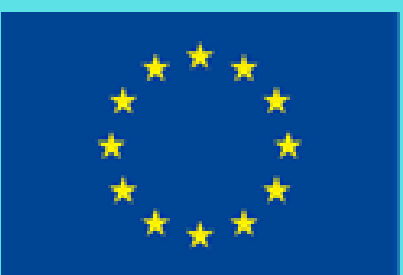
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Persistence. The most important success factor for your organization's online presence is not to stop, once you have started it. If it is hard for you to organize your presence in all the channels discussed above, choose only one or two of them, but once started, do not stop! In the beginning you will not immediately enjoy many comments, fans and followers, but they will increase with time, their feedback will start coming naturally and this will encourage you. It is of crucial importance not to lose your motivation and keep finding new interesting topics for sharing with your online audiences.

Positive attitude. The time we live in belongs to positivism. So, this is the right approach to follow in your Web 2.0 presence. Press the „Like“ button to show that you enjoy the statuses and events of your friends and followers, write your postings in a positive manner, address even the critical notes with respect, and politely explain your points of view. This is important for the overall image of your organization.

Proactivity. In the beginning, you may probably have difficulties organizing adequately your presence in all online channels you choose. In any case, enforce some discipline and keep it. Very soon, the topics and the occasions for activity will be the ones to find you, and will urge you to share more and more. In addition, be proactive towards your fans and their activities. Like their statuses, comment, retweet, and discover more and more occasions for getting in touch with them.



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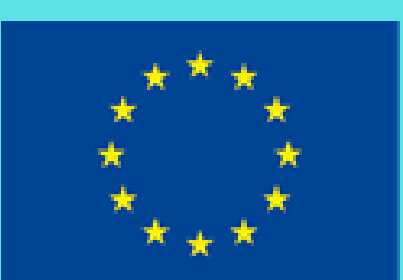
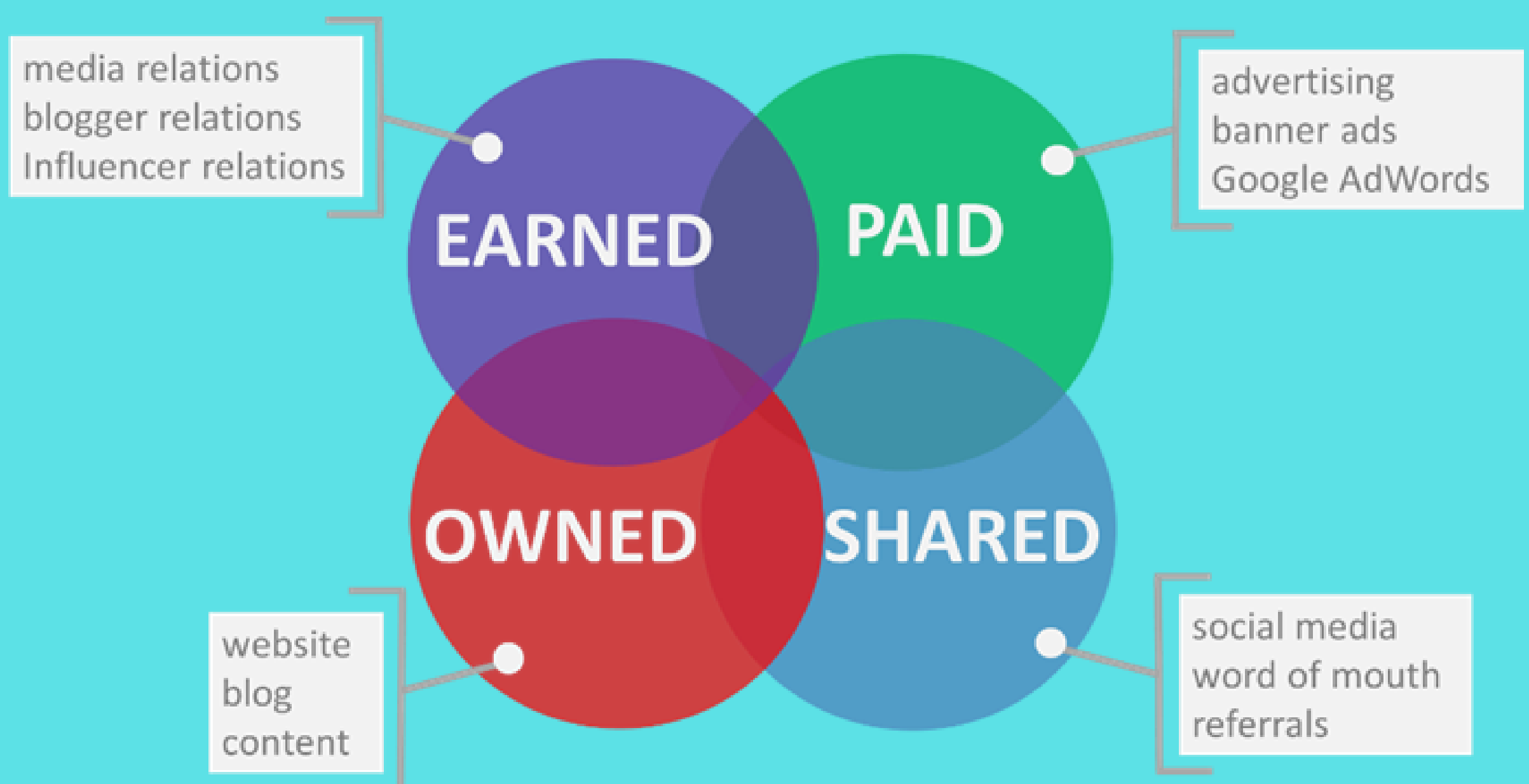
Originality. Right, if you are not ingenious, you risk to remain unnoticed in all of this overwhelming stream of information that circulates both offline and online. Being different today is hard. Find your own style, follow it strictly, stay on the edge, get noticed. This is yet another very important key to your success.

Some more rules

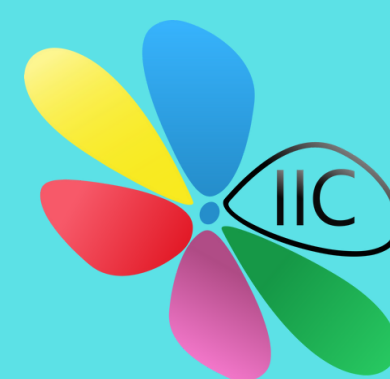
In any case, when it comes to your online places, there are some extra rules to be observed: Mainly use them for your purposes, and do not disclose more personal information than is reasonably necessary.

Keep track of what the leading companies and other organizations → → around the world are doing at these places. Keep track of your competitors, too, and try not to lag behind the trends.

Look around for what is new. Here only several online localities have → → been listed, but have in mind that they are much more, and a new important resource can occur at any time. So, be ready.



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Chapter VI

Culture and Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is the foundation of international cooperation and partnership and it involves the ability of standing back from ourselves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. Why do we do things in that way? How do we see the world? Why do we react in that particular way?

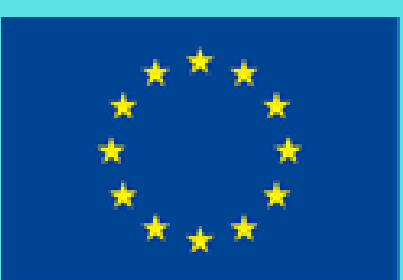
Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with people from other cultures.

People see, interpret and evaluate things in different ways. What is considered an appropriate behavior in one culture is frequently inappropriate in another one. Misunderstandings arise when we use our meanings to make sense of the others' reality.

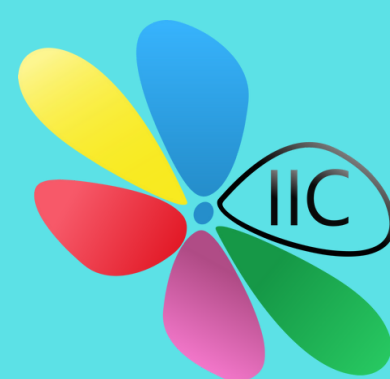
Culture is complex. It is a shared system of meanings, beliefs, values, behaviours which vary from person to person and group to group and through which experience is interpreted and carried out. Understanding a culture takes time and patience. Very often the underlying social values, assumptions, and behaviors associated with a culture can be difficult to understand from an outside perspective.

Degrees of cultural awareness

There are several levels of cultural awareness that reflect how people grow to perceive cultural differences.



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My way is the only way

At the first level people are aware of their way of doing things and their way is the only way. At this stage they ignore the impact of cultural differences. (Parochial stage)

I know their way, but my way is better

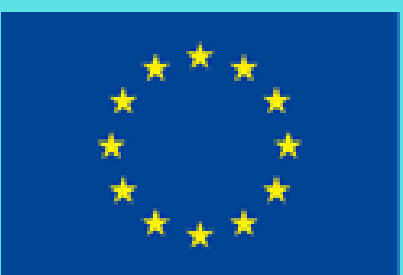
At the second level people are aware of others' ways of doing things, but still consider their way as the best one. At this stage cultural differences are perceived as source of problems and people tend to ignore them or reduce their significance. (Ethnocentric stage)

My Way and Their Way

At this level people are aware of their own way of doing things and others' ways of doing things, and they chose the best way according to the situation. At this stage people realise that cultural differences can lead both to problems and benefits and are willing to use cultural diversity to create new solutions and alternatives. (Synergistic stage)

Our Way

This fourth and final stage brings people from different cultural background together for the creation of a culture of shared meanings. People communicate and interact repeatedly with others, create new meanings, new rules to meet the needs of a particular situation. (Participatory third culture stage)



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Why is cultural awareness necessary?

Cultural awareness is crucial to help members of a multicultural communities and groups identify where things may be going wrong or how to best leverage their differences.

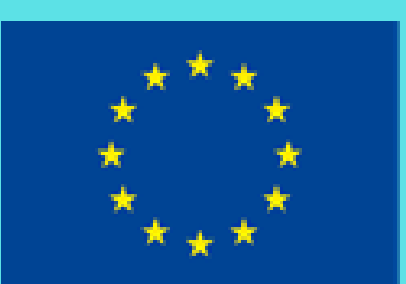
Cultural differences manifest in many ways. Within a multicultural team or group a person's cultural background will impact how they will think, act and behave. We have moved away from the monochromatic look of our societies, to one that is now coloured by representatives from all over the world. With this new multicultural socio come differences in cultures which in turn bring differences in areas such as communication, attitude towards conflict, approaches to task completion, perception of time and decision making styles, and a plethora of other cross cultural differences.

Unless people come to realise these differences between them through cultural awareness, problems can continue and even intensify.

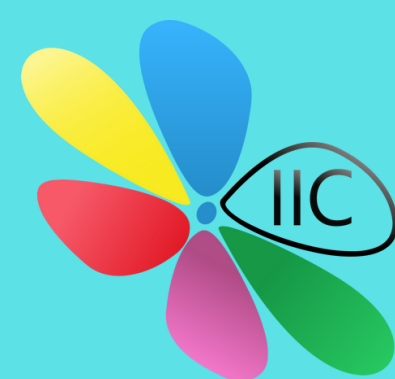
How do I build cultural awareness?

We are generally aware that the first step in managing diversity is recognising it and learning not to fear it. Since everyone is the product of their own culture, we need to increase both self-awareness and cross-cultural awareness. Everyone has a culture which shapes how we see the world, ourselves and others. To understand another culture, we first have to understand our own culture.

There is no book of instructions to deal with cultural diversity, nor recipe to follow. But certain attitudes help to bridge cultures. Although the below presented set of tips on cultural awareness is not exhaustive and exclusive, it may offer some sort of guidance on how to go about realising change in the multicultural environment.



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Build your cultural knowledge: Understand your own culture. Try and learn a bit more about other cultures. Understand and accept the logic of other cultural frameworks.

Admit that you don't know: Knowing that we don't know everything, that a situation does not make sense, that our assumptions may be wrong is part of the process of becoming culturally aware. Assume differences, not similarities.

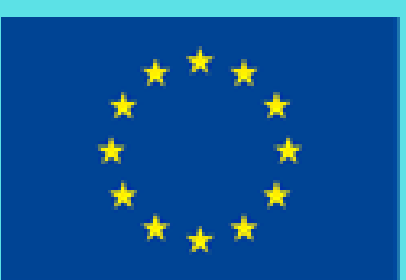
Suspend judgments: Collect as much information as possible so you can describe the situation accurately before evaluating it. There are aspects of culture that are fundamental but subtle and important to grasp if you are to function effectively within a new cultural context.

Treat people as individuals: Information in other cultures is usually based on generalisations. This means that the information will not apply to every single member of that culture. Be aware of this and try and deal with people as individuals.

Avoid stereotyping: Try not to judge and mark people based on their looks, language, dress, and other outward appearances.

Withhold conclusions: Try to avoid jumping to conclusions about people. One of the first rules of cultural awareness is refraining from assuming one way is wrong and one is right.

Refrain from interpreting: Resist the urge to automatically interpret words, gestures, values and other aspects of behavior according to the standards of your culture. Remember that although a person's behavior may not make sense in your culture, your behavior may not make sense in his or her culture either.



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Accept values: Be careful not to impose your personal values, morals, or beliefs. Do not preach your cultural norms. At the same time, it is not necessary to start to respect the new set of cultural values immediately, you simply need to accept it and try to understand it.

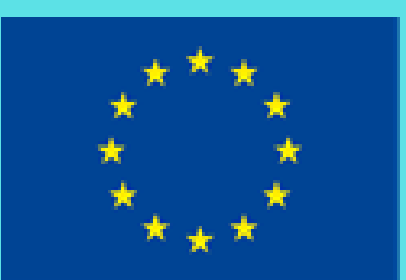
Show empathy: Understanding someone from another culture can be hard. People really do see the world in fundamentally different ways. People behave as they do because of the things they believe in and value. In order to understand another person you need to try standing in his/her shoes. Through empathy we learn how other people would like to be treated by us.

Systematically check your assumptions: Ask your friends and colleagues for feedback and constantly check your assumptions to make sure that you clearly understand the situation. It's easy to misinterpret things people do in a cross-cultural setting. To keep from misunderstanding the behavior of others you have to try to see the world from their point of view, not yours.

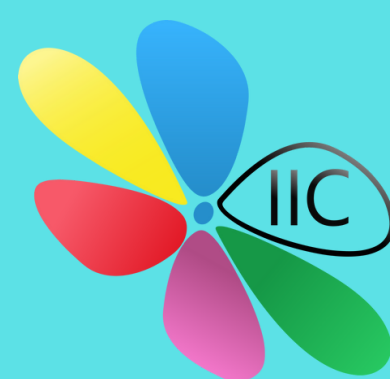
Celebrate diversity: Understanding and respecting cultural differences can lead to greater harmony in your life, your community and the world.

Living and working in a multicultural environment very often leads to a clash of cultures and ends up in cultural shock which can be explained as the feelings of anxiety, disorientation and confusion that

people may experience when they are immersed in a new cultural environment. The first visible aspects that can cause perplexity are the behavior of people, the language – verbal and non-verbal, the clothes, the traditions, the cuisine, the religion, the perception of time, even the climate. Culture is like an iceberg. Some aspects are visible, others are beneath the surface. Invisible aspects of culture influence and cause the visible ones. But to cross and experience cultures isn't easy. It's a complex process in which understanding the context is everything.



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There are four provisional stages of adaptation in a new culture.

- **Honeymoon: First exciting contact with new culture**

You start feeling excitement, curiosity and slight concern

- **Initial confrontation: First intensive feeling with new culture**

You start feeling confusion, you are mystified about the others' culture and behaviour

- **Adjustment crisis: Problems intensify**

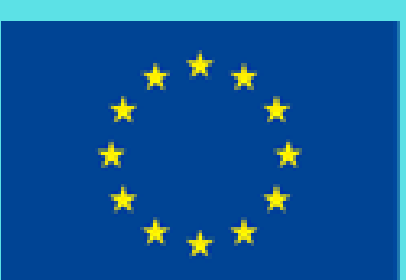
You start experiencing frustration, anger and strong confusion

- **Recovery: Sense of belonging to culture emerges**

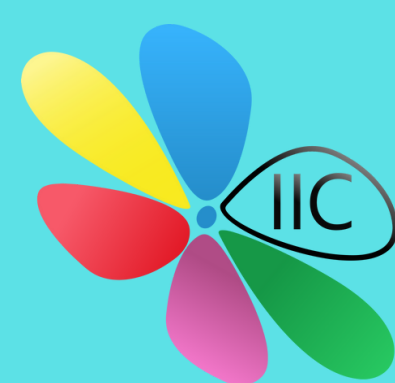
You start to understand the new culture and enjoy many aspects of it. Attempting to understand the cultural background of your partners and friends will enable you to put cultural differences into context, understand your own culture on a more profound level, and contribute to a more enriching exchange experience. As you familiarise yourself with the language, customs, and beliefs of the people from the other culture, you will improve your ability to function, interact and communicate within a new cultural context.

In becoming culturally aware, people realise that:

- We are not all the same
- Similarities and differences are both important
- There are multiple ways to reach the same goal and to live life
- Each situation is different and may require a different solution
- Diversity provides the ground for beauty and creativity in life



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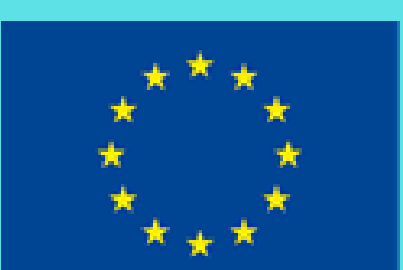


Increasing cultural awareness means to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences. Cultural diversity could be a source of problems, in particular when an organisation needs people to think or act in a similar way. Diversity increases the level of complexity and confusion and makes agreement difficult to reach. On the other hand, cultural diversity becomes an advantage when the organisation expands its solutions and its sense of identity, and begins to take different approaches to problem solving. Diversity in this case creates valuable new skills and behaviours.

Successful organisations have the ability to:



- Accept and value diversity
- Manage the dynamics of difference
- Acquire and apply cultural knowledge
- Adjust to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve



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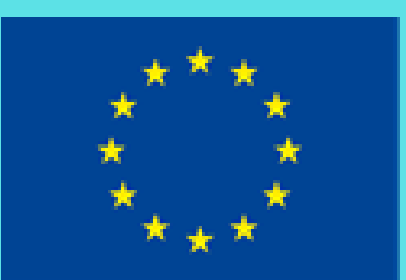
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