

Digital citizenship

Welcome to the topic, what learners can expect

Introduction into the topic

What learners can expect from this lesson: structure, learning objectives

The 21st century has brought a huge boom in information and communication technologies. Digital tools have become an integral part of our daily lives - whether at work, at home or during leisure activities. Today's societies can be called digital, and in addition to entertainment, they use technology and the Internet for all kinds of participation - from culture, through health care, education, business to politics. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has further multiplied the importance of participatory tools and extended their use to several other sectors. This goes hand in hand with the need to increase citizens' digital literacy in order to be able to make effective and good use of online tools, especially participatory ones. Their appropriate use can positively change society, while individuals are able to initiate and achieve change on local, national or even international level. In particular, social networks have become the dominant media channel in the last decade, the function of which is also participatory involvement.¹ In today's digital age, it is really easy to take the initiative, to campaign for positive change, and even get your ideas to the highest politicians or other authorities. However, it is important to know how to do it, and especially if you are a journalist or youth worker and have the opportunity to reach, inspire and educate other people.

Research carried out by the Council of Europe and the *Digital Citizenship Education Expert Group* created by it has shown that one of the main challenges is the lack of awareness of the importance of developing competences in the field of digital citizenship among teachers.² That is why we consider it extremely important for educators, youth workers and journalists to be familiar with digital citizenship and participation tools. In this course you will get acquainted with all the basic concepts in this area - you will learn what forms of digital citizenship we know, how to participate online and especially how you can advocate as a journalist, youth worker as well as youth for positive changes within your community or the whole country and even beyond the borders. We will introduce you to several tools that you can use to do so and become an engine of small or large changes and inspire many others.

¹Ramón Reichert, Karin Wenz, (2019) Digital citizens, IN Digital Culture & Society, Vol. 4, Issue 2, Retrieved from:https://www.academia.edu/40941267/Introduction_Digital_Citizens_Digital_Culture_and_Society_Vol_4_Issue_2_2018

² Janice Richardson, Elizabeth Milovidov, (2019), Digital Citizenship Education Book, Council of Europe Publishing, Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/digital-citizenship-education-handbook/168093586f>

Presentation 1: Typology of digital citizenship

Topic 1: Typology of digital citizenship

The time has changed dramatically over the last two decades and the development of information and communication skills has fundamentally changed the character of the whole society. People, but especially young people, spend almost most of the day connected to the Internet, whether via cell phone or computer. Online space has become an integral part of the day and people use it not only to communicate with friends, but also for education, relaxation etc. The number of digital tools and websites is growing every day and we have been facing a big challenge - to use ICT effectively - not only for entertainment, but also for finding and sharing information, engaging for a good matter and at the same time respect the legal and ethical principles. Thus, with ITC, the individual as well as the whole society gradually changed. The digital age is thus slowly creating digital citizens living in a digital society. So, who can be considered a digital citizen by definition? Certainly not every member of society, but only those who use the Internet on a regular basis and most importantly - effectively.³ Being the right digital citizen goes hand in hand with sufficient digital and media literacy. Such a citizen should be able to:

- Use technology responsibly, appropriately and competently
- Understand, be able to evaluate the credibility and interpret digital content appropriately
- Be able to create, explore and communicate through appropriate tools
- Think critically about the various ethical opportunities and challenges that the digital space brings
- Behave decently in the online space and make safe, responsible and respectful decisions towards everyone else⁴
- Help and guide others in building their positive digital experiences
- Realize that our actions usually have consequences for others
- Participate in a way that leads to the common good⁵

Nine elements of digital citizenship:

1. Digital access

Even though we live in the digital age, not everyone has the same access to technology. Some families or individuals don't even have any devices. This fact was emphasized

³ Aytekin Isman, Ozlem Canan Gungoren, (2014), Digital citizenship, IN The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, Vol. 13 issue 1, Retrieved from:
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277984736>

⁴ Common Sense Media, (2011), Digital Literacy and Citizenship in the 21th Century, A common Sense Media White Paper, Retrieved from:
<https://www.common Sense Media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/DigitalLiteracyandCitizenshipWhitePaper-Mar2011.pdf>

⁵ Digital Citizenship, (2017), Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship, Retrieved from:
<https://www.digitalcitizenship.net/nine-elements.html>

especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when students stayed at home and had to switch to online classes. However, many of them do not have a computer or tablet at home, in which case the educator is obliged to provide alternatives. So if we work with a community and we have certain demands on them in the use of digital technologies, we must firstly get familiar with their situation at home or at school.

2. Digital commerce

It's about understanding how e-commerce works - it's essential for both potential sellers and customers. This is directly related to the solution of security when using money in the digital space.

3. Digital communication

Online communication has become such a common part of our lives that many people do not realize that they should follow the same rules as during offline communication. In the digital space, there is much more bullying, mainly between children and teenagers, but inappropriate communication can also be observed among adults who started using online communication at an older age and no one prepared them for it.

4. Digital literacy

It is the ability to understand technologies and their uses. The more people are digitally literate, the more they are able to make good decisions and use digital technologies for personal or societal growth. Digital literacy is also closely linked to media literacy, like the ability to distinguish relevant information and various hoaxes and misinformation.

5. Digital ethics

Behavior in the online space should have its own rules. Online behavior of people of all ages is often out of control, conflicts arise, people spread anger and hatred through false profiles and so on. This can only be prevented by systematic learning and public discussion on this topic.⁶

6. Digital law

It is related to the responsibility for our actions performed in the online space. No one can behave arbitrarily and with impunity on the Internet. Whether, as in real "offline" life, there are also legal rules in the online space that everyone should follow. Never before has crime been committed more easily than in online space. Digital law therefore

⁶ Diana. Z., (2020), The 9 elements of Digital Citizenship your students need to know, NEO blog, Retrieved from: <https://blog.neolms.com/the-9-elements-of-digital-citizenship-your-students-need-to-know/>

deals with the rights and responsibilities governing the use of technology. However, many people are sometimes unaware of breaking the law. The most common offenses are identity theft, account hacking, cyberbullying and even downloading and publicly using copyrighted content (music, movies, pictures).

7. Digital rights and obligations

Digital law is directly linked to the rights and obligations of internet users. So these are specific responsibilities and freedoms that apply to everyone in the digital world. Young people and adults alike must be led to be aware of the possible consequences of their actions online. If someone is fully aware of rights and responsibilities, he/she should educate then other people around accordingly.

8. Digital health and care

It concerns the physical and mental health of people related to their presence in digital world. On the one hand, technology provides us with a number of positive experiences and good opportunities of all kinds, on the other hand, it can also cause us negative emotions, even depression or various types of loss. People should be aware of the dangers and seek the right balance between the online and offline world. They should also treat others online so as not to cause any harm to their physical or mental health.

9. Digital security

These are preventive digital measures to ensure safety for all users. Every day on the Internet, we are threatened by various viruses and worms that can infect the system and cause irreparable damage to our devices. Everyone should be able to take preventive measures to eliminate this possibility altogether or to prevent it as much as possible. People need to be aware of the consequences of possible attacks and protect themselves and their relatives of friends who are less technically skilled.⁷

The role of media and youth workers in digital citizenship education

Based on the above elements describing a proper digital citizen, it can be stated that still a large sample of society is not sufficiently educated in this field. Not all school curricula educate young people sufficiently to be able to use information and communication technologies for the benefit of society and to participate its building. In addition, many people lack basic knowledge about rights and obligations or security in the online space. Although the school system should

⁷ Diana. Z., (2020), The 9 elements of Digital Citizenship your students need to know, NEO blog, Retrieved from:

<https://blog.neolms.com/the-9-elements-of-digital-citizenship-your-students-need-to-know/>

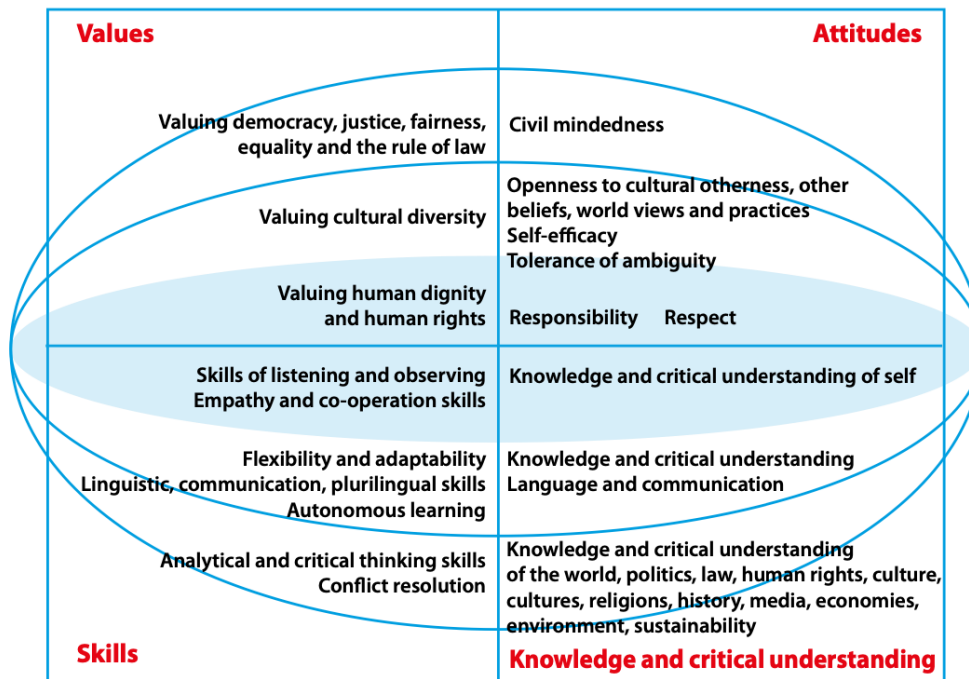
prepare young people in this direction, we cannot rely on it. Responsibility for education also kind of up to journalists and youth workers who, directly or indirectly through their work, can positively influence young people and their surroundings to become good digital citizens. In addition to offline activities, it is possible to contribute to the increase of digital competencies also through social media campaigns. Every medium, youth organization or individual journalist or youth worker has their profiles or fun pages on different social networks, which are followed by a certain number of people. Both professions thus have the ability to reach a certain number of people in the online space of social networks and thus contribute with their activities to increasing digital literacy and participation. Social media has become a kind of unconventional educational tool that plays an important role in many people's lives.⁸ It's the perfect way to reach more people at once. It is necessary to realize that only a minimum of people from the target group of some offline educational activity join the event in person. As journalists and youth workers have an impact on a wider audience, they must first educate themselves in this area and get familiar with the digital citizenship concept. Although it may seem like an extra work to do for journalists, but it is in their interest to help increase digital and media literacy and thus prevent the outflow of support from traditional relevant media towards misinformation and conspiracy webs.

Ways to reach the specific target group and increase awareness about the necessity of digital competences:

- Online campaign published by relevant media
- Online campaign on social networks
- Competition on social networks (especially Instagram)
- Regular sharing of educational content
- Addressing influencers to support the campaign
- A series of educational offline workshops in schools
- Webinar with interesting guests
- Online discussion

A digital citizen who is aware of his rights and responsibilities and is sufficiently digital literate can also use the potential of digital tools to participate in a positive change in society in various ways. One of the important rights of digital users is therefore active **online participation**. However, it requires **participatory skills**, which depend on a range of cognitive and practical skills. These begin to develop in early childhood at home and later in school. We are talking mainly about the ability to conduct a conversation and recognize a situation when it is appropriate to speak and when not. These skills also include empathy, cultural understanding, critical thinking, as well as oral and written expression skills. The aim of digital civic education is to provide everyone with equal opportunities to acquire a whole range of civic competences.

⁸ D. McGillivray, G. McPherson, J. Jones & A. McCandlish (2015), Young people, digital media making and critical digital citizenship, Leisure Studiese



Source: Council of Europe, *Digital Citizenship Educational Book*, Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/digital-citizenship-education-handbook/168093586f>

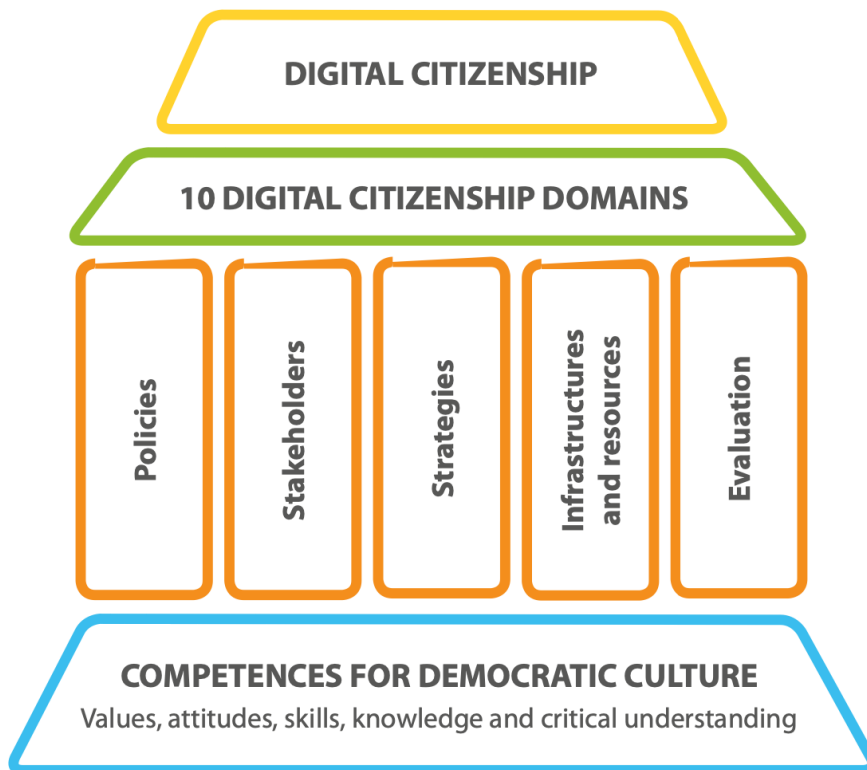
In addition to all the necessary competencies forming the basis of digital citizenship, the Council of Europe has defined 10 domains, which stand on five pillars and together form the so-called **temple of digital citizenship** (See the picture)

The 10 digital citizenship domains include:

1. Access and inclusion
2. Learning and creativity
3. Media and information literacy
4. Ethics and empathy
5. Health and well-being
6. Presence and communication
7. Active participation
8. Rights and responsibilities
9. Privacy and security
10. Consumer awareness

They are pretty much the same as the nine elements mentioned in the beginning of the presentation. An important support of the temple is the five pillars on the digital competencies of the follow-up pillars, which appear to be key to the development of digital citizenship procedures. The most important of these are **policies** and **evaluations**. Positive change and progress are directly linked to policies whose effectiveness must be monitored and evaluated. The path to success leads through the **stakeholders** involved, including a group of young people, teachers or policy makers and many more. The implementation of the intentions also

requires a suitable **strategy**, which cannot be implemented without the necessary resources and **infrastructure**.⁹



Source: Council of Europe, *Digital Citizenship Educational Book*, Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/digital-citizenship-education-handbook/168093586f>

Types of participation:

- 1) Several types of activities related to **interaction with democratic institutions** - this includes participation in elections, communication with elected representatives or bodies at various levels, joining a political party or its youth organization, participation in a government survey, etc.
- 2) **Campaign-related activities** - we talk about campaigns in a broader sense and it can be, for example, signing a petition, joining a group or organization that is campaigning for something, individual advocacy for change, or participating in a protest or demonstration
- 3) **Activities related to community involvement** - this includes, for example, volunteering or unpaid work¹⁰

⁹ Janice Richardson, Elizabeth Milovidov, (2019), *Digital Citizenship Education Book*, Council of Europe Publishing, Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/digital-citizenship-education-handbook/168093586f>

¹⁰ Ofcom, (2009), *Citizens' Digital Participation Report*, Office Communication, Retrieved from https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/19291/main.pdf

State and public administration are gradually being digitized in each developed country, and most of these types of participation are now accessible online, moreover its rapid growth is expected. The positive future of democracy can thus be measured to some extent by the digital skills of its citizens, who will be increasingly involved in the online environment. In particular, social media is becoming a space for political engagement and community building online. In the next section, you will learn how, as an individual or group, you can advocate in the right places and promote your ideas and improvements for the community or society as a whole.

Presentation 2: Advocacy for a change and the best tools

Topic 2: Advocacy for a change and the best tools

Advocacy is directly based on active participation. At first hearing, it gives the impression that it is just an active participation in elections, referendums, petitions or demonstrations. In fact, active participation takes many more forms. There are also various forms of engagement, where individuals or a group formally or informally decides to change the opinion of a certain group, part of society or the whole society through a project or campaign. This category also includes volunteering for various organizations aim to help others, general progress in various areas of society, education, etc. In today's digital age, it's really easy to be heard by people. All you need is a good idea and even without financial resources you can design and expand an awareness raising campaign among the target group. Another form of active participation that falls into the category of "political participation" is advocating for a change towards policy makers in order to bring a change in policy in a certain area. Would you think that as an individual and, moreover, a young person, you do not have the strength or the resources to make such a change? Mistake, it may not always be difficult and we will show you ways to achieve it. In short, active participation means being involved in processes, institutions or decisions that affect the lives of a smaller and larger part of society.

What do we mean by advocacy?

Advocacy can be generally understood as any act performed for the purpose of supporting, implementing, but recommending actions related to the topic you care about. The essence of advocacy is also the use of the collective voice for the purpose of defense or protection of rights, or to support various initiatives. It is therefore often linked to various types of public campaigns. However, advocacy can also be considered a small act, when an individual tries to positively influence own relatives or friends. You can study a certain topic in detail, such as the need to separate waste and try to convince family, friends or your community in person, or in the form of a blog that you share on social networks. There are many possibilities and every small step leading to a positive change in the behavior of even one person is worth it. Advocacy, which

leads to a change in rules or laws, is a bit more complicated and it is necessary to learn the basic procedures and steps.¹¹

Advocacy for policy change

In this case, we are talking about advocacy, which aims to influence the decisions of political, economic or social institutions or systems. This type of advocacy takes several possible forms, the most well-known of which are:

- a) Media campaign
- b) Public presentation
- c) Conduct of the survey
- d) Publication of research

The main goal of these activities is to gain the interest of decision makers who can either directly or indirectly influence a change in the law. In this case, it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of advocacy and lobbying. The term lobbying often evokes a negative connotation and many people associate it with something negative (for example, lobbying of large industrial companies to relax the environmental regulations). In reality, however, it is mostly a positive advocacy carried out by direct contact with policy makers.¹²

Practically children and young people can also advocate for any positive, as well as journalists, youth workers, anyone, regardless of age or education. All you have to do is have the will, don't be afraid and get to work.

Advocacy involves the following steps:

1. Name the problem and your goals

The very first step is to identify the problem and determine exactly what the change you are trying to achieve should look like. In order to move on, you need to do a survey and find out the answers to the questions:

- Why is this problem bothering me?
- What exactly should be the result of this change?
- What other people are affected by this problem?

2. Find or obtain the necessary data which I can rely on

It is not enough to name the problem, but in order to start public advocacy for the change you need to get the necessary data on the issue. So you need to dig deeper into the topic and study

¹¹ UNICEF, (2019), Youth advocacy guide, The Youth Programmes at the South African Institute of International Affairs, Retrieved from: <https://www.voicesofyouth.org/tools-resources/youth-advocacy-guide>

¹² YouthMetre, (2017), Advocacy for youth policies, Retrieved from: <https://youthmetre.eu/advocacy/>

it thoroughly to properly prepare for the argument. Try to find relevant data and scientific arguments that answer the several questions (What causes the problem? Where did the problem started? Which parties are involved in the problem and what groups of the population is affected?) Where can I get such data and answers to questions? Here are some of our tips:

- Look at the websites and official documents of recognized international organizations and institutions whose agenda is related to your problem
- See the website of the Statistical Office of your country
- Browse several databases through which you can access scientific articles. If you are a student, most universities offer free access to several world scientific databases. If you are not a student, you can use <https://scholar.google.com> where you will find many free access publications
- If you can't get any evidence, try to think about who is negatively affected by this problem and talk to them. Or interview some experts. Or conduct a questionnaire survey among several respondents.

3. Come up with a plan to achieve the change

When we have an idea of the problem and its cause based on data, it is important to lay out the next steps and create an exact plan! Creating a plan is preceded by setting several goals. Don't be afraid to be ambitious, you won't fail if you don't achieve some of the goals. However, make sure your goals are SMART, that is, specific, measurable, achievable, result-based, and time-bound. Then look for suitable solutions to meet the goals. Then come up with some activities that you need to do - write it down on paper. Remember to manage and divide tasks properly between the team if you don't work alone. Take care of risk management - name the challenges you face and the problems that may arise. Set deadlines for each step.

4. Make as many people as possible aware of your campaign to express their passive or active support

The more people join you, the better your chances of success are. The Internet is the easiest and cheapest way to get your campaign among a large number of people. In order to get to policy makers in person, you need to have the support of several people or important non-profits/institutions. Find a key message that you will communicate to others - it must be accurate, engaging with as many people as possible and convincing them of the need to support you. Sometimes you may need more key messages depending on your audience. Create a catchy visualization for the campaign, and before you launch the campaign, test it with a few people and get their feedback on it.

Examples of campaigns:

a) **Petition** - launch an online petition and get as many signatures as possible from the public

- b) ***Social media campaign*** - use all available social networks and try to get your message among as many people as possible. Don't forget about suitable hashtags, keep in touch and invite the public to actively or passively join you, for example even by sharing a campaign
- c) ***Get the support of influencers*** for your campaign - getting one or more Instagram well-known faces for the campaign can guarantee a large reach
- d) ***Contact the media*** - contact the local or national media with a request to disseminate your campaign
- e) ***Organize an event*** - organize an interesting support event where you present your campaign to the public¹³

5. Understand who has the power to change a thing and how you can convince them

If you decide that you want to go even further and advocate directly to policy makers, you must first properly study the applicable policies and regulations that address your issue. Find out the nature of the legislation and determine exactly what should change. Such documents should be publicly available on the Internet and, if not, it can be requested by the competent authorities. Find out which office is responsible for the agenda. Is it enough to solve the problem at the local level? In that case, it may be enough to contact local policy makers. However, it is also relatively easy to address members of the national parliament, ministers or their secretaries, or members of the European Parliament. Appropriate preparation for the argumentation is crucial. Find out as much as you can about the person and prepare for the interview. It is important for the policy maker to get interested already during the first email you send. So think about the appropriate wording and ask him/her for a meeting to introduce to the campaign. The more people behind you, the greater the chance that he/she will listen to you and try to help you. You can also address some decision-makers via social networks if they are very active there. Another form of meeting such people is through the conferences and different public events.

6. Follow up activities and Evaluating the Effectiveness

When the official campaign is over and you haven't achieved all the goals, don't give up and create a plan for a new campaign that will be a follow-up. Or just keep spreading awareness among as many people as possible on a given topic. Finally, for the success of other activities, it is important to evaluate the campaign and find out where you made mistakes and how effective your plan was.

Example of successful youth advocacy campaign

¹³ UNICEF UK, Youth Advocacy Toolkit, Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/working-with-young-people/youth-advocacy-toolkit/>

Youth for the Change of Bangladesh against harassment on public transport

Youth for Change organized a very effective campaign to advocate against gender-based violence and sexual harassment of women on public transport in Bangladesh. This activity was a reaction to the rape and murder of a student that took place on a bus in 2017.

It was a media sensation, many people were shocked and the information was spreading through all media channels. This helped a lot to start the campaign. In order to plan and mainly target the campaign, the organization first conducted an online survey via social media and they found that up to 100% of all female respondents had already experienced sexual harassment in public transport.

Based on the data obtained, the group subsequently addressed the President of Child Rights Caucus of the National Parliament and the National Human Rights Commission, as they intended to bring a real change of the whole society and this is possible mostly only with the support of policy makers.

What did the group achieve with its campaign?

It was a very successful initiative, which was later taken on by the Bangladeshi government. This was preceded by dialogues with public transport operators in several cities, one of the results of which was separating the bathroom for women on board of public transport ships. The group also placed stickers with a free helpline in the public transport area. These also spread within the whole country – they appeared in schools, workplaces etc.

Possible risks of any campaign are lack of public support, lack of evidence and data supporting our claims and goals. The campaign was successful because it was supported by several policy makers, also because it was a very publicly exposed and sensitive topic. The organizers prepared very carefully in advance and planned the steps. A great advantage was the data obtained from a large group of women, with whom they could then argue. The group understood that they needed to get the male population on their side, so they made, among other things, a series of videos on social media urging men in one of them to take action if they are a witness of such a situation in public transport and speak out against harassment.¹⁴

Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is the use of any form of media in the promotion of any campaign for change, whether the behavior of society or legislation. It's an easy way to get your message to a lot of people. In particular, local media are often open to such opportunities to support an interesting project that has the ambition to bring positive change for the community. If it is a nationwide

¹⁴ Plan International, The world's best youth campaigns - and why they worked, Retrieved from: <https://plan-international.org/girls-get-equal/best-youth-led-campaigns>

project, there is a good chance that you will be able to gain the interest of the big national medium as well. They often have a lot of power and your message can reach policy makers before you address them directly. You can also use the media to get financial support from organizations that like your idea.¹⁵ However, it's important to be careful not to allow inappropriately chosen media to ruin your campaign by misinterpreting the facts. If you are a journalist, always be open to helping a good cause. Remember that you have a power to positively influence the opinions and behavior of the society. When you have the opportunity to support an interesting independent project, go for it!

Resources

List of used resources

1. Ramón Reichert, Karin Wenz, (2019) Digital citizens, IN Digital Culture & Society, Vol. 4, Issue 2, Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/40941267/Introduction_Digital_Citizens_Digital_Culture_and_Society_Vol_4_Issue_2_2018
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¹⁵ Community Tool Box team, Section 1. Working with the Media, Center for Community Health and Development: University of Kansas. Retrieved from: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/media-advocacy/working-with-media/main>

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[Center for Community Health and Development: University of Kansas](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/media-advocacy/working-with-media/main). Retrieved from:
<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/media-advocacy/working-with-media/main>