

FACT FILE

CULT: *Committee on Culture and Education*

The question of empowerment of the civil society and active participation:
Across Europe there are divisions between groups based on age, race, gender and faith. How might these divisions be overcome, and in what ways can particularly young people be educated to become active citizens and have more say in the solution and decision-making processes in their societies and in the EU heading towards the European elections in 2019?

Civil society refers to all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the State.¹

Active citizenship is the involvement of citizens in all aspects of society by making informed choices and decisions, having a say in how their countries are governed and taking action on their own and with other people to contribute to their communities. This can mean attending party meetings, signing petitions, taking part in demonstrations or otherwise participated in activities associated with political groups.²

“In 2015, 11.9% of the adult population in the European Union (EU) said they were active citizens, meaning that they had attended meetings, signed petitions, or otherwise participated in activities related to political groups, associations or parties.

The highest rate of active citizenship was recorded in France (24.6%), followed by Sweden (22.1%) and the Netherlands (24.6%), while Cyprus (2.1%), Slovakia (2.8%) and Romania (3.6%) registered the lowest participation rate.

People with a higher level of education tended to be more active. 20.8 % of the EU population who had a tertiary education said they participated in activities related to active citizenship. This was above the rates for persons who had upper secondary or non-tertiary education (11.4%) and those of lower education (5.6%) level.

Another factor that seemed to play a role was income. People with a higher income tended to be more active citizens. The rate for those citizens with the highest level of income reached 17.9%, while it stood at 8.9 % for those in the lowest income group.”³

¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html

² https://youtu.be/RjM_ausVDZU

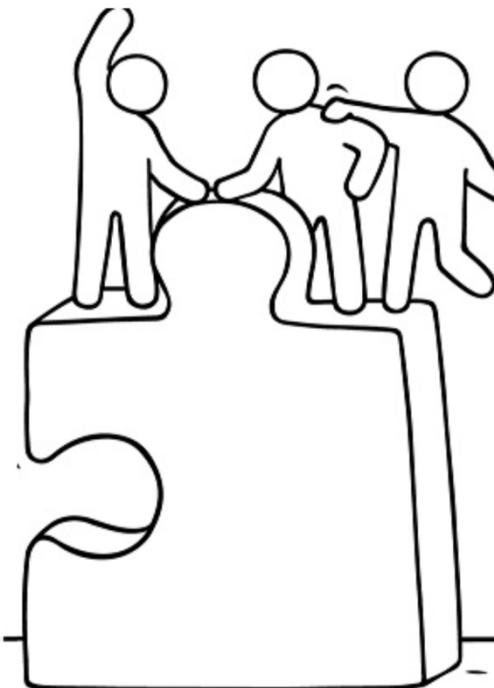
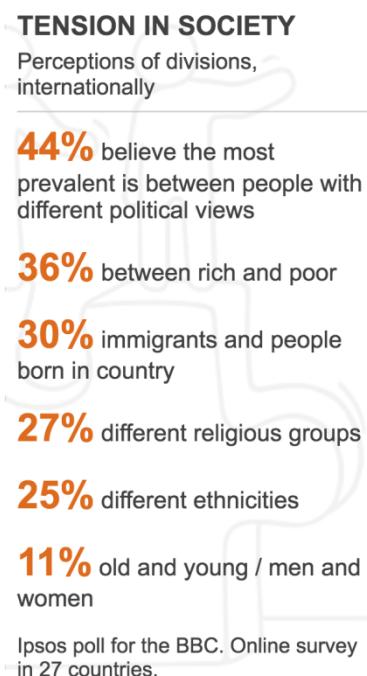
³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20170914-1>



One of the EESC's (European Economic & Social Committee) main missions is "*promoting the development of a more participatory European Union, which is more in touch with popular opinion, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society.*"⁴ The EESC has 350 members, drawn from 3 groups: employers, workers and "Diversity Europe". The EESC is a consultative body, which enables members of different socioeconomical groups to voice their opinion on EU issues.

Since April 1st, 2012, European citizens have the right to call upon the European Commission to propose or change existing European legislation thanks to the **European Citizens' Initiative**.⁵

Especially nowadays Europe is seen as more divided and less tolerant than ever before and Europeans are concerned about the rising between different groups and future. Therefore it is of utmost importance that the youth starts taking action.



⁴ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/about>

⁵ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/civil-society-citizens-participation/european-citizens-initiative>